WESTERMANN & Co
NEW-YORK
524 BROADWAY

Sold 1874

This BOOK was given, 1800.
By the Associates
Of the late Rev. Dr. BRAY,
To the Lending Library
Of Ystradmeirig,
In the County of Cardigan,
And Diocese of St Davids,
Established by the Associates, 1800.

LIBRARY
OF THE
Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Case SCC
Shelf 2289
Book e.1

Division
Section
No.

George Shepheard

1751

B/L

CHRISTIANITY

Juſtified upon the

Scripture Foundation.

BEING

A ſummary View of the Controverſy between CHRISTIANS and DEISTS.

In TWO PARTS.

In which the Subject Matter of the Goſpel Revelation is vindicated againſt Objections; and the Evidence for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion briefly ſtated.

Preached in ſeveral Sermons (but now digeſted into one continued Diſcourſe) for the Lecture founded by the Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, Eſq. in the Pariſh Church of St. *Mary le Bow*, in the Years 1747, 1748, 1749.

BY

HENRY STEBBING, *D. D.*

Chancellor of the Dioceſe of *Sarum*, and Chaplain in ordinary to his Majeſty.

LONDON,

Printed for C. DAVIS, over-againſt *Grays-Inn-Gate, Holborn.*

MDCCL.

To the Right Honourable

Richard Earl of *Burlington*,

Sole ſurviving TRUSTEE for the

LECTURE

Appointed by the

Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, Eſq.

This Diſcourſe is inſcribed,

By his Lordſhip's

Moſt obedient humble Servant,

HENRY STEBBING.

PREFACE.

I Committed theſe Papers to the Preſs, more that I might not diſappoint the uſual Expectations of the Public, than for any Opinion that I have improved upon what has been ſaid upon the Subject by the many able and learned Writers that have gone before me. I have no Diſcoveries to boaſt of; but if, whilſt I am treading a beaten Path, there ſhould be any thing in the Method and Compoſition of the Work that may pleaſe the Reader; and if I have given any Aſſiſtance to make common things better underſtood; I ſhall reach the utmoſt Bounds of my

my Expectation; and flatter myself that I have done a public Service, at a time when every Help is wanted to check the Growth of Infidelity.

I think that the proper Work of a Defender of CHRISTIANITY is, to to defend it upon the foot that *Christ* taught it, that is, upon the foot of *Natural Religion*. Natural Religion is and must be the Foundation of all Religions; and in this Sense *Jesus Christ* was a Teacher of Natural Religion, as he required the Practice of it. But his MESSAGE was *Pardon* and *Reconciliation* to Sinners, which is the proper Subject of his Revelation. With this I set out; and, the common Principles of Natural Religion *supposed*, I write

I write as to thoſe who, thus far inſtructed, want only to be informed, what it is that the Goſpel propoſes, which natural Light cannot open to us. In ſetting this forth I have made uſe of Scripture Authorities; but in this I have paid a due regard to the Direction of the honourable Founder, which is, not to enter into Conteſts upon any Points in which Chriſtians of different Communions or Perſuaſions differ among themſelves; but ſo far only appealed to Scripture, as is neceſſary to ſhew, that the Doctrines I am defending are the real Doctrines of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles; and not Doctrines of my own Invention.

In anſwering the Objections againſt Chriſtianity, inſtead of ran-

ſacking the many Books lately publiſhed by Unbelievers, and following particular Authors in their particularMethods of reaſoning (which would have made this Work tedious and leſs inſtructive) I have delivered my own plain Senſe as I had digeſted it in my Mind, from what I have formerly read and conſidered upon this Subject. I do not pretend (which would be great Preſumption) to have cleared up all Difficulties in the Chriſtian Scheme; but I hope I have anſwered all Objections, which, as a Chriſtian Preacher, I am concerned to anſwer; either by ſhewing, that there are no real Difficulties in ſuch Objections; or if there are, that the Chriſtian Religion is no more concerned in them than Natural Reli-

gion is. Natural Religion has its Difficulties as well as Revealed; and they are much of the ſame ſort. It is therefore a juſt Demand upon thoſe who believe in a God and a Providence, though there are Difficulties which they cannot clear; that they accept the Goſpel (ſuppoſing it ſupported by ſufficient Evidence) with the ſame Allowance. I ſuppoſe, that every one who believes a God, whilſt he ſees Difficulties in accounting for the various Methods of his Providence, does it upon this general Principle, that the common Appearances of Nature are a much better Evidence for his Exiſtence, than thoſe Difficulties (which may ariſe merely from the narrow Limits of the human Underſtanding) are to ſhew the

the contrary. If this ſhould turn out to be the Caſe with reſpect to Revelation (as I truſt it will) we are then upon a *Par* ; and it will be quite abſurd, whilſt you admit the one with all its Difficulties, on account of the ſame or like Difficulties, to reject the other.

In the ſecond part of this Work, where I lay together the *Evidence* of the Truth of *Chriſt's* Miſſion, Dr. MIDDLETON, in his *Introductory Diſcourſe* and *Free Enquiry*, has furniſhed me with ſome Employment. Theſe Pieces, as to their profeſſed Intention and Deſign (which is to ſhew that there were no Miracles wrought after the Times of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles) are out of my Subject. But as

as the Doctor, in managing that Argument, has advanced ſeveral *general Poſitions*, which in their *Conſequences* impeach the Authority of the New Teſtament, he *ſo far* fell within my Province; and ſo far *only* have I concerned myſelf with him.

As my Appointment was limited to a certain Period which I could not exceed, and my Subject comprehends a Variety of Matters; I was obliged to be very ſhort upon each particular Point. But if what I have ſaid is plain and convincing, Brevity, I hope, will not be thought a Fault; and in whatever Light this Book may ſtand in the Opinion of Unbelievers (with whom, I am afraid, lit-

tle good is to be done) if the doubtful and wavering may be eſtabliſhed by it; or the ſerious, but leſs inſtructed Chriſtian, who wants only to be enabled to *give Reaſon of the Hope that is in him*, may receive any Satisfaction from it; I ſhall think my Pains well employed.

E R R A T A.

Page 78. lin. 1. inſtead of *becauſe they are immaterial*, read, *ſuppoſing them Subſtances of a diſtinct Nature, endued with Powers and Faculties, that have* (eſſentially) *no Dependance upon the organical Body.* Pag. 127. lin. penult. in the Note, for *Dialogus* read *Dialog.* Pag. 128. lin. 21. for *Bus* read *But.* Pag. 159. lin. 15. for *Phariſee* read *Phariſee's.* Pag. 241. lin. 6. for *Maſter* read *Maker.* Pag. 249. lin. 5. tranſpoſe *thoſe* for *theſe*, and *vice verſâ.* Pag. 251. lin. 10. after *ceaſe*, inſtead of a Point of *Interrogation* put a *Colon.* Pag. 255. lin. 11. inſtead of *Corruption* read *corruptible.* Pag. 316. lin. 6. for *Judea* read *Judah.* Ibid. lin. antepenult. for *Laſtly* read *Beſides.* Pag. 442. lin. 2. dele *as well.*

CHRISTIANITY

Juſtified upon the

Scripture Foundation.

PART I.

SHEWING

The CREDIBILITY of the GOSPEL.

WHOEVER offers any thing as of Uſe or Advantage to Mankind, he has a Right to ſet forth his own Pretenſions; and according to the Reaſon, Importance, and Credibility, of the Matters propoſed, and the Evidence a Perſon gives of his Abilities and Capacity to bring them to Effect; he will deſerve or not deſerve the public Attention. It is according to the full Force and Virtue of this Maxim (univerſally admitted in all caſes)

The Pretenſions of Jeſus Chriſt ſet forth from Scripture.

 that

that I purpoſe to conſider the Pretenſions of JESUS CHRIST, in order to determine the grand Queſtion between Us and Unbelievers; "Was he a Prophet ſent from God; "and are his Doctrines and Precepts to be "received as the Will and Law of God?" I ſhall conſider, I ſay, firſt, the *ſubject Matter* of his Doctrine; or *what* it is that he propoſes to us for our Acceptance, and of what *Uſe* or *Importance* it is, regard being had to the Happineſs of Mankind, or the wiſe Ends of God's Providence, ſo far as they may appear to human Reaſon. I ſhall conſider, ſecondly, the *Credibility* of this Doctrine in *itſelf* or in its *own Nature*; whether it be ſuch as recommends itſelf to our Acceptance if ſupported by proper and ſufficient Evidence of its coming from God; or whether there is in it any ſuch Contrariety to the natural Dictates of our Reaſon, as will juſtify us in rejecting it as uncapable of Proof. If there is no ſuch Contrariety, then, 3dly, it ſhall be conſidered, what *Teſtimony* God has given to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and whether it be ſuch as ought to convince and ſatisfy reaſonable Men. This Diſtribution of the following Work will take

take in all neceſſary Queſtions, and bring the Diſpute to a regular Concluſion. For thus it may be argued. The Wiſdom of God does nothing in vain. Therefore if the Goſpel, as to the *ſubject Matter* of it, be of no Importance, it cannot be from God. Again. Nothing that contradicts the Reaſon of Man can be from God; becauſe the Reaſon of Man, ſo far as it goes, is the Wiſdom of God imparted or communicated to Man, and God cannot contradict *himſelf*. It is neceſſary therefore that both the Importance of the Goſpel, and its Conſonancy to the Principles of natural Light, be made appear, in order to come at this previous Concluſion, that the Goſpel *may* poſſibly, or probably, be from God. But that it actually *is* ſo, it is the *Teſtimony* that God has given to *Jeſus Chriſt*, that muſt ſhew; and if it *does* ſhew it, the Reaſon of Man has nothing farther to demand, in order to make Faith a reaſonable Conviction.

As to the firſt Queſtion, "What is the "*ſubject Matter* of Chriſt's Doctrine, or "what is it that he propoſes to us for our "Acceptance?" You muſt take the An-

ſwer to it from Chriſt himſelf, or thoſe whom he commiſſioned to publiſh his Doctrine to the World: You can have it no where elſe. If the Queſtion was, What is the Law of *England*, muſt it not be ſet forth from our Law-books and Statutes? What then does Chriſt ſay? *The Son of Man* (meaning HIMSELF) *is come to ſave that which was loſt*; that is, *loſt Mankind:* For ſo it is ſaid, *John* iii. 17. *God ſent his Son into the World——that* THE WORLD *through him might be ſaved.* This is the great, diſtinguiſhing Character of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he is THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD; and for the full Explanation of it, it will be neceſſary to ſhew from the New Teſtament, how and in what Senſe Mankind were *loſt*, and how and in what Senſe they are *ſaved* by Chriſt; for theſe Points, once particularly explained and underſtood as laid down in theſe Writings; both the *ſubject Matter* of the Goſpel and the *Importance* of it, will be fully underſtood, which were the Points to be cleared, under this firſt head of our Enquiry.

St.

St. *Paul* then tells us, that whereas Man in his firſt, original, State, was created to Immortality and Happineſs; *Adam*, by tranſgreſſing the Law of his Creator, brought Death and Miſery upon himſelf and all his Poſterity. Thus, *Rom.* v. 12. *By one Man Sin entered into the World and Death by Sin, and ſo Death paſſed upon all Men.* And 1 *Cor.* xv. 22. *In* Adam *all die.* This agrees with the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, to which theſe Paſſages moſt evidently refer. For there it is ſaid, that God *put the Man whom he had formed into the Garden of Eden—and commanded him ſaying, of every Tree of the Garden thou mayeſt freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou ſhall not eat of it, for in the Day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die*, Gen. ii. 8. 16, 17. The Event ſhews the Meaning of this Threatning to have been, not that *Adam* ſhould inſtantly die, but that he ſhould become mortal; which ſuppoſes him to have been created immortal. But *Adam* ſinned and became mortal, he and his Poſterity then in his Loyns, as the Event alſo ſhewed,

and the Apoſtle farther enforces, *Rom.* v. 17, 18. *By one Man's Offence Death reigned —By the Offence of one Judgment came upon all Men. Adam* lived his appointed Time, and then *returned to the Duſt from whence he was taken.* Gen. iii. 19. But by God's Appointment he did not die till he had ſown the Seeds of Generations to come, who being born in his Corruption, followed him (as it was natural to be expected) in the Example of his Diſobedience. The very firſt-born Son of *Adam* was a Murderer; and as Men *multiplied upon the Face of the Earth*, Tranſgreſſions multiplied with them, and at laſt prevailed to that Degree, that *it repented the Lord that he had made Man on the Earth*, which brought on the Flood that deſtroyed them; all but *Noah* and his Family, who, by the ſpecial Providence of God, were preſerved alive, to raiſe a new World out of the Ruins of the old one.

All I ſhall ſay of this ſecond Race of Men is, that they grew by degrees as bad as the firſt. Idolatry (that foul Monſter, fertile of every thing that is odious to God) ſoon lifted up her head, and ſpread Corruption and

and Wickedneſs over the whole Earth. St. *Paul* hath ſaid no more than what all Hiſtory confirms, when ſpeaking of the *Gentiles* he tells us, that they were *becòme vain in their Imaginations, and* had *changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beaſts, and creeping Things*, Rom. i. 21, 23. Idolatry was the prevailing Sin of the World; and as falſe Notions of the Deity naturally produce a wrong Behaviour, ſo it was here. For, as the Apoſtle goes on, ver. 24. *God gave them up to Uncleanneſs—unto vile Affections —to a rebrobate Mind—to Fornication, Covetouſneſs, Murder, Deceit*, and all kinds of Wickedneſs. Nor was the Caſe much better among the *Jews*; for though by the very Inſtitution of their Republick, they were tied down to the Worſhip of the one true God, yet (as their Hiſtory ſhews) they frequently revolted from him to the Service of Idols. And though their great Prophet and Leader, *Moſes*, had very ſtrongly enforced the natural Law in all its Branches, yet were they greatly defective in Duties of the moral kind, ſuppoſing (as it ſhould ſeem)

that great Punctuality and Exactneſs, in ritual Performances, would make good the Defect; for which they are ſeverely reproved by St. *Paul*, Rom. ii. 17. *Behold! thou art called a Jew, and reſteſt in the Law, and makeſt thy Boaſt of God, and art confident that thou thyſelf art a Guide of the Blind, a Light of them which are in Darkneſs—Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thyſelf? Thou that preacheſt a Man ſhould not ſteal, doſt thou ſteal? Thou that ſayeſt a Man ſhould not commit Adultery, doſt thou commit Adultery? Thou that abhorreſt Idols, doſt thou commit Sacrilege? Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the Law, through breaking the Law diſhonoureſt thou God? For the Name of God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles through you.*

Here then you ſee in all Mankind a general Revolt from the Law of God. Some gave away his Glory to the Workmanſhip of his Hands. Others, who knew God, ſerved their own Luſts and vile Affections; and ſuch was the Extent of this Corruption, that the Apoſtle pronounces abſolutely (without Exception or Reſerve) ALL *have ſinned*

ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God—there is none righteous, no not one, Rom. iii. 10. 23. And it is to be obſerved, that he does not treat this Revolt as an excuſable Caſe, but as what ſubjected them to the juſt Judgment of God. As to the *Jews*, they had a written Law, acknowledged and admitted by themſelves, againſt which they were Sinners; in conſequence whereof the Apoſtle repreſents them, as *treaſuring up to themſelves Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who will render to every Man according to his Deeds.* Rom. ii. 5, 6. And though the *Gentiles* had no Law *written upon Tables of Stone*, as the *Jews* had; yet they had a Law *written in their Hearts.* God had manifeſted his own Being and Perfection in the Works of the Creation, as it ſaid, Chap. i. verſe 19, 20. *That which may be known of God is manifeſt in* [or *among*] *them, for God hath ſhewed it unto them. For the inviſible things of him from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; ſo that they are without Excuſe.* And in the

the next Chapter he ſays, that *when the Gentiles which have not the Law* [meaning the *written* Law] *do by Nature the things contained in the Law, theſe having not the Law are a Law unto themſelves, which ſhew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their Thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing, one another*, Rom. ii. 14, 15.

It is very true (and the Apoſtle here directly charges it upon the *Gentiles)* that in fact both the true Knowledge of God, and alſo of the natural Law, was in a great meaſure loſt among them. But this he conſiders as (chiefly) the Effect of their own wilfull Corruptions, and ſuppoſes, that God had given ſuch Evidences of himſelf by the Works of the Creation, and ſtamped ſuch legible Impreſſions of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, in the Hearts of Men, by the Reaſon and Underſtanding which he had given them; that, had they been honeſtly conſulted and attended to, they would have directed them to another kind of Behaviour. God may well be ſpoken of as having

having *manifeſted*, or *ſhewed* himſelf to the *Gentiles*, if he vouchſafed them that Light which (if rightly uſed) *would* have made him manifeſt, though (for lack of Care and Attention) the far greater Part of Mankind were very groſly miſtaken in their Notions concerning him and his Worſhip. At leaſt it is certain, that amidſt all the Corruptions that prevailed in the *Gentile* World, there was a Foundation left for more Religion and Virtue than was commonly practiſed; otherwiſe I do not ſee how the Apoſtle will be juſtified in pronouncing them *without Excuſe*.

You have now the Scripture Account, in what Senſe Mankind was *loſt*. Under the Forfeiture of Life and Immortality through the Sin of *Adam*; and moreover, through their own perſonal Sins and Corruptions, obnoxious to God's Wrath and Condemnation. The next thing propounded was to ſhew in what Senſe (according to the ſame Scripture) Mankind is ſaved by *Jeſus Chriſt*.

The moſt natural Conception is, that as Immortality was loſt in *Adam*, it is reſtored

to

to us again, in *Chriſt:* That as, by Sin, we are obnoxious to Wrath and Condemnation; in him we have Remiſſion, and Reconciliation with God. This is *ſaving that which was loſt* in the full Extent of the Expreſſion; and this is the true State of the Caſe. For what ſays *Chriſt? I am the Door*; BY ME *if any Man enter he ſhall be ſaved.*— I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, *John.* x. 9, 10. Again, ℣ 27, 28. *My Sheep hear my Voice, and they follow me, and* I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE. And at Chap. xvii. ℣ 2. *Chriſt* declares, that God had *given him Power over all Fleſh, that* HE SHOULD GIVE ETERNAL LIFE *to as many as ſhould* believe in him. But how does *Chriſt* give eternal Life? Not by diſannulling the Law of Mortality (which ſtill remains to be the Lot of all the Sons of *Adam)* but by the RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. For ſo ſays *Chriſt* himſelf; *This is the Will of him that ſent me, that every one that ſeeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have* EVERLASTING LIFE; *and* I WILL RAISE HIM UP *at the laſt Day*, John. vi. 40. And it is well to be obſerved, that this abundant Grace and

and Favour of God towards loſt and ſinful Man, is ſet forth by our Saviour as the Fruit or Effect of his Death and Sufferings. *The Son of Man came not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter, and to* GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM *for many*, Matt. xx. 28.

This Doctrine (at firſt ſuccinctly delivered by our *Lord Chriſt)* is largely inſiſted upon and ſtrongly urged by his Apoſtles, and particularly by St. *Paul*, from whom I ſhall cite theſe few following Paſſages to ſerve inſtead of many. *Since by Man came Death, by Man came alſo the Reſurrection from the Dead: For as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive*, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. And *Rom.* v. 11, 12. *We joy in God thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom we have now received the* ATONEMENT. *Wherefore as by one Man* [Adam] *Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, and ſo Death paſſed upon all Men* — Here the Apoſtle ſtops ſhorts, and leaves this, or ſomething to this Effect, to be ſupplied.—*Even ſo by one Man* [Jeſus Chriſt] *Sin and Death ſhall be deſtroyed.* For thus it follows; *as by the* OFFENCE *of one*, JUDGMENT *came upon all Men*

Men to CONDEMNATION; *even ſo by the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of one the* FREE GIFT *came upon all Men unto* JUSTIFICATION.—*That as Sin hath reigned unto Death, even ſo might Grace reign through Righteouſneſs unto eternal Life,* BY *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* ℣ 18. 21. All this implies that *Chriſt* hath reſtored to Mankind what was loſt by *Adam's* Tranſgreſſion: Reſtored (I ſay) by his *offering* himſelf as a RANSOM for us all. *All* (ſays he) *have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God, being juſtified freely by his Grace, through the* REDEMPTION *that is in Jeſus Chriſt; whom God hath ſet forth to be a* PROPITIATION *thro' Faith in his Blood,* —*for the Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt,* Rom. iii. 23.—25.

One Thing yet, fundamentally material, is to be taken notice of, *viz.* that this Grace and Favour of God in *Jeſus Chriſt*, belongs to thoſe, and to thoſe only, who being obedient to the heavenly Call, ſhall return back to the Law from whence they have ſwerved, and ſerve God by true Repentance. The ſubject Matter of the Preaching of *John* the Baptiſt, who was ſent to prepare

the

the Way for *Chriſt*, was REPENTANCE. *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.—And now alſo the Ax is laid unto the Root of the Tree; therefore every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the Fire*, Matt. iii. 2. 10. *Jeſus* himſelf began with the ſame Leſſon, Chap. iv. 17. and declares it to be the End of his coming to *call Sinners to* REPENTANCE, Chap. ix. 13. And to this End it was that he choſe his Apoſtles, and ſent them forth into all the World, *that* REPENTANCE *and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations*, Luk. xxiv. 47. What our Lord appointed them to, that the Apoſtles punctually executed; they went out every where, preaching that Men ſhould REPENT *and believe* the Goſpel, offering the Hope of ETERNAL LIFE to thoſe who ſhould obey, and threatning ETERNAL CONDEMNATION to the Diſobedient.

From this ſhort and general Account of the Goſpel, we ſee plainly that Chriſtianity preſuppoſes Natural Religion, and ſtands upon it as its Foundation. For if all had

ſinned

ſinned and come ſhort of the Glory of God, there muſt have been a Law by which all Men were originally bound; *for where there is no Law there is no Tranſgreſſion.* Therefore ſuch Principles as theſe, that there is a God and a Providence—that there is a natural, eſſential Difference between Right and Wrong—and that Man is a moral and accountable Agent, are Principles which Mankind are preſumed generally to have been inſtructed in, antecedently to the preaching of the Goſpel; and the Apoſtles treat Mankind as if they had been, or might have been, ſo inſtructed. For they no where ſet themſelves forth as offering the firſt Notices of God to his Creatures, but refer to him as having already manifeſted himſelf by the Works of the Creation; nor do they treat the natural Law, as a Law wanting any obligatory Force, which the Authority of God, ſpeaking in and by them, was to ſupply; but they charge Mankind directly with being Sinners againſt it, and being held under Condemnation merely as having acted againſt that Senſe of Good and Evil, which every Man muſt feel who hath not corrupted himſelf by evil Habits;

and

and given himſelf a Nature that God never gave him. The Truth is, that the Belief of the Deity muſt ſtand upon natural Evidence, and can ſtand upon nothing elſe. For thoſe ſupernatural Manifeſtations which prove a Revelation, preſuppoſe the Being of God as evident from the common Appearances of Nature, or they are of no Force. If you believe that there is a God, Miracles will prove his Power and Preſence to ſuch or ſuch particular Purpoſes: But if you can account for common Appearances without a Deity, you may as well account for uncommon Appearances without him too; there being nothing more in the one to prove a God, than there is in the other. In like manner, as to the natural *Law*; Revelation may approve, and confirm what Reaſon dictates, as every true Revelation does and muſt: But it cannot change the Natural Law ſo as to make it any other Thing than what it is in itſelf, nor can it offer any thing that is in its Nature more excellent; for he that fulfils the whole Moral Law, acts fully up to the Dignity and Perfection of his Nature. The Natural

Law may be imperfectly underſtood, or the Natural Law may be neglected; but ſuppoſing a Man in all Points to ſee what is right, according to the Situation and Circumſtances in which Nature places him, and to act agreeably to ſuch Apprehenſions; he will be the very Creature that God intended he ſhould be. The moſt perfect of created Beings can do nothing more.

But the Caſe, as we have ſeen, was otherwiſe. All were Sinners; and this it was that opened the Way for the Work of the Goſpel, which (in the Scripture Account) was and is to ſerve as an INSTRUMENT to reſtore the Obedience of the Natural Law, and Mankind, who had departed from it. For though God *had not left himſelf without Witneſs*; Men had blinded their Eyes, and did not ſee the Evidences of his *Power and Godhead.* Though they had a Law *written in their Hearts*, their Luſts and Paſſions, which had gained the Dominion over them, had greatly effaced thoſe natural Characters. To all this the Goſpel

Goſpel offers a Remedy; and the Reaſonableneſs and Fitneſs of this Remedy, and the Grounds upon which it ſtands, is what I ſhall undertake, in theſe Diſcourſes, to juſtify againſt Unbelievers; leaving the Principles of Natural Religion (as *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles did) to reſt upon their own natural Evidence. In order to this, it will be neceſſary to have the general Plan of Chriſtianity, which I have now laid before you, perpetually in View, and trace it minutely through all its ſeveral Parts; there being ſcarce one of them which, in its turn, has not been excepted againſt. If theſe Exceptions ſhall appear to be weak and inconcluſive, and the Goſpel be found to be in itſelf credible, we ſhall then be properly prepared to proceed to the Evidence; to which every reaſonable Man will find himſelf concerned to pay all due Attention, ſince, ſuppoſing it ſhould come out to be full and ſufficient, the Dignity and Importance of the Goſpel will be viſible to all the World. If there be any thing that becomes the Goodneſs of the Supreme Being, it is (by Ways ſuitable to his Wiſdom) to put his Creatures into a Capa-

city of being acceptable to himſelf; and the moſt careleſs Man upon Earth cannot ſurely think it an indifferent Matter, whether he embraces the Offers of God's Mercy, to his eternal Happineſs, or rejects them, to his everlaſting Condemnation.

Let us conſider, then, whether the Method propoſed by the Goſpel, and which has already been laid before you, be, in the Nature of it, a Method ſuitable to the Wiſdom of God. By which my Meaning is not, to inquire, whether there is nothing in the great Work of our Redemption, but what our Reaſon fully and perfectly comprehends. It is granted there are many things in it which are beyond human Comprehenſion; and the Apoſtle confeſſes as much, when he calls the Goſpel *the Wiſdom of God in a Myſtery*[a]. But the Point is, whether, ſo far as we *do* know and underſtand of what the Goſpel propoſes, there is any juſt Reaſon to find Fault; or whether there be any Thing which bears a *Contrariety* to our natural Notions or Conceptions of Things. If there is nothing of this Sort, we ought to be ſatisfied:

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 7.

for

For to demand it as a Condition of our believing the Goſpel, that it propoſes nothing that human Reaſon cannot fathom, is in Effect, and by Conſtruction, to make human Wiſdom the Meaſure and Standard of the Wiſdom of God. For if it be granted that the Wiſdom of God may ſee Reaſons for many Things, which the Wiſdom of Man, by the Force of its own natural Operations, cannot; the Concluſion muſt be, that our not comprehending the Reaſon and Fitneſs of what he propoſes as the Object of our Faith, can be no Objection againſt our believing it; unleſs you will ſay, that God has no Right to demand our Reliance upon his Veracity, but is bound, in all the Ways of his Providence with regard to Mankind, to explain the Reaſons of his Proceedings; which is a moſt groſs Impeachment of almoſt every Perfection of his Nature, and nothing ſhort of denying him to be God. If God made and governs the World, it is very certain that he does *not* thus act in many Caſes: For ſearch the infinite Variety of natural Effects, and ſee how few of the Cauſes lye within our Reach. And if the Reaſons of Things lye hid in

the natural World, how likely is it that they ſhould do ſo in thoſe kind of Providences which concern the moral Conduct of Men, and the Methods of bringing them to that Happineſs which is to be the Reward of that Virtue which conſiſts in paying him Honour, and Reverence, and Truſt, and a filial Obedience? Such Objectors as theſe, therefore, have no Right to be heard; nor (that I may take notice of it once for all) ſhall I admit any Exception to the Goſpel as legitimate and pertinent, which holds as ſtrongly againſt Natural Religion, the Truth of which the very Queſtion ſuppoſes, and is admitted in the Argument by thoſe with whom alone I am concerned. If a Man is an *Atheiſt*, let him ſay ſo, and we muſt go another Way to work. But if any ſerious and religious Perſon finds a Difficulty in reconciling theſe Things to Reaſon, to ſuch I ſhall apply myſelf, and endeavour to give the beſt Satisfaction to their Doubts that I am able.

Of the Fall and its Conſequences.

I muſt begin with the Hiſtory of the *Fall*, and its *Conſequences*; for this is the Foundation of the Doctrine

Doctrine of the *Redemption*, and if the Foundation itſelf cannot ſtand, the Superſtructure muſt neceſſarily fall to the Ground. The Hiſtory is to be found in the Third Chapter of the Book of *Geneſis*, in which there are two Things of principal Account, *viz.* the *Temptation*, and the *Sentence*. As to the *Temptation*, it was by the *Serpent* firſt ſeducing the *Woman* to eat of the Fruit of the forbidden Tree; which Circumſtance is diſtinctly vouched by St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. xi. 3. *I fear leſt by any Means, as the* SERPENT *beguiled* EVE *through his Subtilty, ſo your Minds ſhould be corrupted*, &c. which Unbelievers are wont to look upon as a very ridiculous Story; and ſome Chriſtians (it ſhould ſeem) have been ſo ill reconciled to it in its obvious and literal Senſe, as to turn the whole into Allegory. Thoſe who beſt like this Way of interpreting, are welcome to it; for the Truth of Chriſtianity is not at all concerned in the Queſtion. If *Moſes* wrote this as an Allegory, St. *Paul* may alſo be ſuppoſed to have referred to it as an Allegory; for he does not explain how he underſtood it. But as my own Judgment inclines to the literal Senſe, I ſhall undertake to

juſtify the Hiſtory in the literal Senſe; which will be placing the Diſpute upon a Bottom, which, I conceive, Unbelievers will judge to be the faireſt; becauſe the having Recourſe to Allegory has the Appearance of avoiding Difficulties inſtead of anſwering them.

It is well underſtood, I preſume, that thoſe who take this Hiſtory in the literal Senſe, do not ſuppoſe that it was the mere brute Animal that tempted *Eve*, but the Serpent actuated by the *Devil*. The Author of the *Book of Wiſdom* ſays, that *through the Envy of the Devil came Death into the World*, Chap. ii. ver. 24. And it ſhould ſeem to be in Alluſion to this very Hiſtory, that our Saviour [b] ſays of the Devil, that *he was a Murderer from the Beginning*, John viii. 44. and that St. *John* calls the Devil, *the old Serpent which deceiveth the whole World*, Rev. xii. 9. Theſe Paſſages may ſerve as Evidence to ſhew it to have been the Senſe of the *Jewiſh* Church, that the *Devil* tempted *Eve*; and will any one pre-

[b] Of our Saviour's Senſe of this Matter ſee more in the learned Biſhop of *London's* Appendix, p. 21.

tend to ſay that this is incredible? Will you undertake to ſhew, againſt the Authority of Scripture, that there is no ſuch Being as the Devil? Or can you ſettle the Limits of his Power? Suppoſe then this to have been the Caſe, that the Devil tempted *Eve*; and that he did it, not by aſſuming the Form of a Serpent, but (as the Hiſtory ſeems plainly to carry it) by making uſe of a real Serpent, as his Organ or Inſtrument; there will then, in the whole Story, be no more of Figure than this one (which is a very common one) the *Inſtrument* put for the *Agent*. The Scripture Language runs—*the Serpent ſaid*, ſo or ſo: and ſo we talk every Day—*the Poppet ſaid* this or that; when the Speech is not the Speech of the *Machine*, but of the Man behind the Curtain. But the great Difficulty is to account how the Woman could be deceived by ſuch an Inſtrument.

Some have ſuppoſed, that *Eve* miſtook the Serpent for ſome heavenly Meſſenger; and to make way for this Notion have obſerved, that before the Fall the Serpent was not that frightful Creature it is now, but mild and

and gentle; not crawling and winding about upon the Ground, but lofty, and going upright upon his Feet. Or elſe, that he was a flying Serpent, having Wings, and ſhining brightly like Fire. The Scripture mentions *flying*, *fiery* Serpents, which are called *Seraphim*, the very Name given to the higheſt Order of Angels; whence it is conjectured, that theſe Angels appeared to Men in the Form of thoſe Serpents. The Devil therefore (ſay they) made uſe of ſome ſuch Serpent, that he might reſemble one of the moſt illuſtrious Angels, which moved *Eve* the more readily to attend to his Diſcourſe; taking him to be one of the heavenly *Seraphims*, which ſhe had ſeen ſometimes in ſuch ſplendid Form, attending upon the divine Glory [c].

That the Serpent was debaſed as to his outward Form after the Fall, the Scripture very plainly ſuppoſes. *Becauſe thou haſt done this, thou art curſed above all Cattle, and above every Beaſt of the Field*; *up-*

[c] See Biſhop *Patrick*, and the Authors of *Univerſ. Hiſt.*

on thy Belly ſhalt thou go, and Duſt ſhalt thou eat all the Days of thy Life, Gen. iii. 14. What his Form was before, is a Thing quite uncertain. That he did not crawl upon the Ground, is clear; for to ſay, *upon thy Belly* SHALT *thou go*, implies, that *till then* he did *not* go upon his Belly; and where elſe was the Curſe? But, of whatever Form this Serpent was, that *Eve* miſtook him for a heavenly Meſſenger, is a Suppoſition not to be admitted: For had this been the Caſe, ſhe would naturally afterwards have pleaded, in juſtification of her having eaten, that, in her Apprehenſion, God had reverſed his own Law, and that ſhe had his Permiſſion (ſignified to her by his Miniſter) for what ſhe had done. But ſhe pleads no ſuch Matter; but when God ſaid, *What haſt thou done?* She confeſſes her Fault, and lays the blame upon the Serpent, who had ſeduced her. *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*, Gen. iii. 13. This ſhews that ſhe took it to be a Serpent that ſpake to her, and not a Meſſenger from Heaven.

Be this admitted; and let us next conſider in what Light this muſt have appeared to

to *Eve*. It is not to be imagined, that *ſhe* knew any thing of a Spirit (whether good or evil) actuating the Serpent. She ſaw nothing but a Serpent; and what muſt ſhe have thought? Why, either that the Serpent naturally had the Gifts of Speech and Reaſon, or that he had not. To ſuppoſe the firſt, may ſeem to faſten upon *Eve* a Degree of Credulity incredible. But lay aſide Prejudice, and the Wonder perhaps may ceaſe. In *our* Way of thinking the Ideas of Speech and Reaſon (as natural Gifts) will not conſiſt with the Idea of any earthly Creature but what is human. But how are we certain that *Eve* had, or could have had the ſame Notion? That the Serpent was not a human Creature ſhe well knew; but it is very far from being certain, that ſhe knew as well, that, naturally, none of the Creatures which ſhe ſaw, had Speech and Reaſon, her Huſband and herſelf excepted. We know that Man alone has naturally the Gifts of Speech and Reaſon; but how do we know it? Why, by that Experience and Obſervation which it is not neceſſary to be ſuppoſed that *Eve* had, at the Time when the Serpent accoſted her.

Some

Some Writers have maintained, that the Serpent had, originally, the Gifts both of Speech and Reaſon, but loſt them by the Curſe. I will not anſwer for the Truth of this; nor does it ſeem to ſtand with the Scripture Account, which gives not *Reaſon* to the Serpent but *Subtilty*, in common with other Brutes. But this I may venture to ſay, that no body can prove, that, in the Circumſtances under which *Eve* then was; ſhe might not have Cauſe ſufficient to induce her to think, that (naturally) the Serpent had the Gifts both of Speech and Reaſon. The Hiſtory does not intimate, that *Eve* was at all familiarized to this Creature which is called a Serpent. She might have known ſo much of his outward Form as to diſtinguiſh him from other Brutes. And if ſhe had remarked (as, it is natural to think, ſhe muſt have remarked) in him the Tokens of a *ſuperior Subtilty*; this muſt have *prepared* her to have believed him to be a reaſonable Creature, when upon his (perhaps *firſt*) near Approach to her, ſhe heard him diſcourſe and reaſon. If you could even now ſuppoſe a Perſon

ſo

ſo much a Stranger to the World, as to know nothing, by his own Obſervation, or by Information from others, of the Powers of the Brute Creation; it would be impoſſible for him immediately to determine whether a Dog, or a Monkey, and many other Creatures, had not the Gifts of Speech and Reaſon. There is no Evidence that *Eve* had either Obſervation or Information ſufficient to ſatisfy her in this Caſe; and it is not at all a hard Suppoſition that ſhe had not. The Interval that had paſſed between her Formation and her Fall, might have been[d] too ſhort for her to have informed

[d] If we might be allowed to depart from the commonly received Opinion, and place the Formation of *Eve* at ſome Diſtance of Time from the Creation of *Adam*, there will be room enough to ſuppoſe that *Eve* had very little Knowledge of the Works of the Creation, when the Serpent attempted her, how much ſoever her Huſband might have had. The Second Chapter of *Geneſis* looks very much this Way: for *there* the placing *Adam* in the Garden of Paradiſe, where he is ſpoken of as wanting a *Help meet*——the Prohibition of the Uſe of the Tree of Knowledge—the calling together the Beaſts and Fowls for *Adam* to give them Names; are mentioned as *prior* to *Eve's* Formation: All which ſeem to be too great a Variety

herſelf

herſelf, or to have been inſtructed by her Huſband, if he indeed was able to have inſtructed her, which is a great deal more than can be proved. He knew that he was ſuperior in Dignity to all other Creatures, becauſe he had Dominion given him over

of Incidents to be taken into the ſixth Day's Creation, unleſs (which will ſuit my Purpoſe as well) you will ſay with Mr. *Whiſton*, that the ſix Days in which the World was created, was ſix Years. Nor is the Scripture clear on the other hand, that the Formation of *Eve* was within the ſix Days. For though it is ſaid in the Account of the ſix Days Work (Chap. i. verſe 27) that God created Man *Male and Female*; it will no more certainly follow, that the Female was THEN created, than it will certainly follow, that the Appointment of the Sabbath was coæval with the Creation becauſe the Account of its Appointment ſtands *connected* with the Hiſtory of the Creation. The ſacred Hiſtorian is not a nice Obſerver of Order and Method in this Narration, as every one who reads it, will eaſily perceive. The ſtrongeſt Proof that *Adam* and *Eve* were both created on the ſixth Day, is its being ſaid, that *on the ſeventh Day God reſted from* ALL *his Work*. But general Expreſſions are not always to be underſtood without Limitation; and it is not here ſaid (abſolutely) that God reſted from ALL his Works, but that he reſted from all his Works *which he had made*, which it might be very allowable to ſay, though it was ſuppoſed that *Eve* was not *then* made, but ſome Time after. You will obſerve, that

them;

them; and we read of him, that God *brought unto him every Beaſt of the Field*, &c. *to ſee what he would call them*, Gen. ii. 19. But if *Adam gave Names* to all living Creatures, this is no Proof that he knew their Natures, otherwiſe than as we

the Formation of *Eve* was a Creation *ſui generis*. *Adam*, with all other living Creatures, was formed out of *inanimate Matter*: *Eve* was a living Creature taken from the Subſtance of *another* living Creature. When therefore *Moſes* ſaid, that God *reſted from* ALL *his Works which he had made*, he might refer to the firſt kind of Creation only; which ought ſo much the rather to be allowed, becauſe it is certain that *every* Work of God was not within the ſix Days Creation; for the *Chaos* is mentioned as ſubſiſting antecedently to the firſt Day, as the Matter from which all other Things were to be created. There was a Creation therefore *prior* to the Work of the ſix Days, *viz.* a Production of *ſomething* out of *nothing*; and why may it not as conſiſtently be ſuppoſed that there was another Creation, of a Kind diſtinct from the other two, *after* the ſix Days were expired? I muſt leave this to the Reader's Judgment. My Reaſoning will ſtand upon either Hypotheſis: But if this be admitted it will be *more eaſy* to account for the Fallacy put upon *Eve*, who, it may be preſumed, was not as yet ſo well inſtructed in the Powers of the ſeveral Creatures which ſhe ſaw about her, as to know that the Serpent had not naturally the Gift of Speech, or Reaſon.

do

do, by Uſe and Experience; and how much of this ſort of Experience he had gained before his Fall, is altogether uncertain.

The next Suppoſition in the Caſe is, that *Eve* knew, that, naturally, the Serpent had *not* the Gifts of Speech or Reaſon. The Queſtion then with her muſt have been, How came he by them? For that he had them, ſhe could not doubt, againſt the Evidence of her Senſes. Thus far there is no Credulity. And if you aſk, Why did ſhe believe him? Might not the Devil improve this very Circumſtance into an Argument to give Credit to his Story? The Scripture Hiſtory of this Tranſaction is very ſhort. We know no more than the main Subſtance of this Temptation, and its fatal Iſſue. But it is natural to ſuppoſe, that, in the Courſe of the whole Affair, many Things might have happened, of which the Scripture ſays nothing; and it is ſcarce to be conceived, that, when *Eve* heard the Serpent ſpeak, it ſhould not have raiſed her Curioſity to know the Cauſe of ſo extraordinary a Thing. Suppoſe this, and ſuppoſe with-

al, that the Serpent told her, that it was owing[e] to the Virtues of that very Tree,

[e] The Authors of the *Univerſal Hiſtory* have put this Suppoſition; but very inconſiſtently with the other Hypotheſis before mentioned (and by them alſo adopted) *viz.* that *Eve* miſtook the Serpent for a Seraph, or heavenly Meſſenger. But *Milton* hath ſet this forth in a beautiful Light, *Paradiſe Loſt*, B. ix. 553. where *Eve* ſpeaks to the Serpent thus.

What may this mean? Language of Man pronounc'd
By Tongue of Brute, and human Senſe expreſs'd!—
Thee, Serpent, ſubtil'ſt Beaſt of all the Field
I knew, but not with human Voice endu'd.
Redouble then this Miracle and ſay,
How cam'ſt thou ſpeakable of mute?

To which the Serpent anſwers;

I was at firſt as other Beaſts that graze
The trodden Herb, of abject Thoughts and low,
As was my Food, nor ought but Food diſcern'd,
Or Sex; and apprehended nothing high;
Till on a Day roving the Field———

And then having told of his falling upon the forbidden Tree, and eating its Fruit, he ſhews her the Effects;

Sated at length, ere long I might perceive
Strange Alteration in me, to Degree
Of Reaſon in my inward Pow'rs, and Speech
Wanted not long; though to this Shape retain'd.
Thenceforth to Speculations high or deep
I turn'd my Thoughts; and with capacious Mind
Conſider'd all Things viſible in Heaven,
Or Earth, or Middle; all Things fair and good, &c.

I have produced this as Authority for nothing but of

of whoſe Fruit he was now tempting her to take and eat. If ſhe could believe him in this (and why might ſhe not?) the Strength of the Temptation muſt have born Proportion to her Aſtoniſhment; and the more wonderful ſhe thought it that a Brute ſhould be turned into a reaſonable Creature, the more eaſily would ſhe be perſuaded, that, by the ſelf-ſame Means, a human Creature might become as God. I do not lay this down for certain Fact, but the very Poſſibility of the Suppoſition may ſhew us, that without a more particular Account of the Circumſtances of this Tranſaction than the Scripture has given us, we are by no means qualified to pronounce it *incredible*.

The principal Difficulties being thus removed; let thoſe who are diſpoſed to turn this Story into Ridicule, take the whole of it together, and conſider, whether, ſuppoſing that God in his Wiſdom ſaw it fit to bring the Virtues of our firſt Parents to a Trial, it be poſſible to conceive how it could have been done (as Matters then ſtood) but by

to ſhew that the Hypotheſis has Senſe and Probability in it; which is all I have Occaſion for.

ſome ſuch Way as the Hiſtory here ſets forth. The Memory of the Creation muſt now be ſuppoſed to have been very freſh and ſtrong upon the Minds of the firſt Pair. God's viſible Manifeſtations of himſelf to them were frequent, as the Scripture repreſents, and as it is almoſt neceſſary to be ſuppoſed, if it were only to inſtruct them how to live, and provide for themſelves in a World where every Thing was new and ſtrange, and where they had no Guides like themſelves, as we have. Under theſe Circumſtances, it was ſcarce poſſible that a Thought of *Idolatry* ſhould have entered into their Minds; nor were they under any ſuch Influences from *ſenſual* Appetite, as their Poſterity were afterwards expoſed to, when Mankind came to increaſe and multiply. Food for their bodily Suſtenance was all they wanted; and here too there was no Danger from Intemperance, their Drink being pure elementary Water, and their Meat the Fruits of the Earth. In the firſt, Nature afforded no Variety; in the latter there was much. *Here* therefore the RESTRAINT was laid, and one particular Tree only was ſingled out from among the

the reſt, of the Fruit of which, upon pain of Death, they were forbidden to eat.

Now then comes the Queſtion; Whence was the Trial of their Obedience to ariſe? Or what was there to tempt them to tranſgreſs a Law ſupported by ſo ſevere a Sanction? *Want* it could not be, for there was no Scarcity, ſince they were allowed free Liberty to eat of all the reſt of the Trees in the Garden. *Wantonneſs* of Appetite ſeems to be too *weak* a Principle to work ſuch an Effect, at leaſt whilſt Appetite was cool and regular; not inflamed by vicious Indulgence, which in ſuch a State of Things had no Place. But there was ONE Opening yet left. They were Lords of all that Heart could wiſh; but not uncapable of being wrought into Diſcontent at the Lot their Maker had aſſigned them, and Aſpirings after higher Things. On this weak Side therefore the Devil attacks *Eve*, *God doth know that in the Day ye eat thereof then your Eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil*, Gen. iii. 5. Whatever the Devil *preciſely* meant by this, here was plainly a Bribe offered to her Pride; that

ſhe ſhould become like God himſelf, or like thoſe glorious Spirits which ſhe had ſeen miniſtring before him. But how ſhould he have perſuaded *Eve* of this? Had he aſſumed no viſible Form, but ſimply ſuggeſted this to her Thoughts, by ſome ſecret Influence upon her Mind, it would have paſſed without Effect. He may tempt Us to commit Sin by ſuggeſting evil Thoughts, and exciting the Appetite to evil Things. But this is in Matters where common Experience directs us to the Means. Thus, when he ſuggeſts to us a luſtful or revengeful Thought, we know that we have naturally the Power of gratifying thoſe Appetites. But by what Experience in the World could *Eve* have been led to imagine, that the forbidden Tree had any ſuch Virtue as the Devil pretended? She knew and had experienced that other Trees had only the Virtue of Nouriſhment; and God had expreſly told her, that the Virtue of this Tree was Death. It would therefore have been to no purpoſe for the Devil to have barely ſuggeſted ſuch a Thought as this into the Mind of *Eve* (which would have appeared to her in no other Light than as a wanton

Sally

Sally of her Imagination, and been neglected as ſuch) it was neceſſary that he ſhould preſent himſelf in ſome viſible Form, or by ſome viſible Inſtrument, to vouch for the Virtues of this Tree, by ſuch kind of plauſible Addreſs, as might draw her Attention and impoſe upon her Credulity; and if to appear as one of the heavenly Retinue was not permitted him (as, for the Reaſon hinted at above, we may preſume, it was not) where will you find an Inſtrument ſo proper as the Serpent, who approached neareſt to the Dignity of human Nature, and might perhaps, with reſpect to his external Form, have come much nearer than we, at preſent, are wont to imagine? It is a hard Matter to rid ourſelves of Prejudices which by early Poſſeſſion are become almoſt natural to us; but, taking this Account all together, ſo far am I from thinking it incredible; that, had it been the Intention of *Moſes* not to give us a true Hiſtory, but a Fiction, that ſhould carry the Face and Appearance of Probability, he could not (in my Opinion) have thought of any Thing that would better have agreed with the original State of Things.

From the *Temptation* then let us proceed to the *Sentence* denounced upon *Adam's* Tranſgreſſion, the Penalty of which was *Death*, upon himſelf and all his Poſterity. I have before obſerved that the Threatning *Thou ſhalt die*, did not intend that *Adam* ſhould *inſtantly* die, but that, whereas he was created immortal, he ſhould, in caſe of Tranſgreſſion, thenceforth become mortal, or *ſubject* to Death. But the Queſtion ſtill is, What this *Death* means: And here Chriſtian Writers go different Ways. Some will have it to ſignify no more than ſimply the Period of his Exiſtence in this World; others extending the Notion of it to the Pains and Penalties of a future State. I ſhall not enter into this Diſpute; but in this, and in all other Points where Chriſtians differ, ſhall follow that Senſe which appears to me moſt convenient. A Liberty, I preſume, which I have a Right to make uſe of; becauſe Infidelity can receive no real Support from Objections founded in Notions, that are not clearly and plainly delivered in Scripture. Now all that the Scripture ſeems clearly to ſay in this Caſe

is,

is, that *Adam* ſhould *return to his Duſt*; as you will ſee by comparing the original Threatning with the Sentence, as it ſtands *Gen.* iii. 17, 19. *Becauſe thou haſt hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and haſt eaten of the Tree of which I commanded thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt not eat of it—In the Sweat of thy Face ſhalt thou eat Bread till thou return unto the Ground; for out of it waſt thou taken: For Duſt thou art, and unto Duſt ſhalt thou return,* Gen. iii. 17, 19. If *Adam* had not ſinned, he would not have *returned to the Ground.* But, after he had ſinned, he is ſentenced to *return to the Ground.* This is that which conſtitutes the Death of a Man, conſidered as compounded of Soul and Body; and as the Threatning and the Sentence muſt correſpond to each other, this therefore muſt be underſtood as all that was intended by the Words, *thou ſhalt die*, unleſs you will ſay that the Sentence was *reſpited*; which will come to the ſame Thing, as to our preſent Purpoſe. For, in either View, nothing appears about *Adam's* Soul, whether it ſhould at all exiſt after his Body was returned to Duſt, or in what State it ſhould exiſt.

exiſt. Of this, I ſay, nothing at all is ſaid. If a Redemption had not been intended, God might have deſtroyed him both Soul and Body; or his Soul might have been preſerved to be puniſhed in the Kingdom of that Apoſtate Spirit by whom he had been ſeduced. But as the Scripture is ſilent upon this Point, it will beſt become us to be ſilent too.

Let the Unbeliever now ſay what he has to object. By his own free Grace, God created *Adam* to Immortality. He that grants a Favour has a Right to grant it upon his own Terms. The expreſs Stipulation with *Adam* was, that he ſhould not eat of the Fruit of one particular Tree in the Garden. Where then (I aſk) was the Fault that God ſhould withdraw the Privilege, when the Condition upon which it was granted, was broken? Some perhaps may think that this was a very hard Condition; and that there is a very great *Diſproportion* between the Sin and the Puniſhment. If you will call that a Puniſhment, which was nothing elſe than the Forfeiture of a Privilege; it may reaſon-

reaſonably be demanded, What do you know of what is proportionate or diſproportionate in ſuch a Caſe? In human Things we think it reaſonable to ſubmit to the Wiſdom of Legiſlators, as the proper Judges, to what Crimes what Puniſhments are to be annexed. And why is not the great Governor of the Univerſe to be treated with the ſame Diſtinction? I ſhall have Occaſion to enter into this Point more fully in another Place. In the mean time, let ſuch Objectors take care that they are right, in eſtimating the Value of this Offence, and that they do not impoſe upon themſelves by Images, taken from common Things by no means adequate to the Matter under Conſideration. *Adam's* Puniſhment (we admit) was nothing leſs than Diſheriſon. The eating of the Fruit of a Tree, you will ſay, was a trivial Thing. And if *Adam* had done any thing elſe of which you can ſuppoſe him to have been capable, would not the Objection have been juſt as good? Offences are great or ſmall only by Compariſon with others; and what *other* Offence can you think of, which in compariſon to this you would call *great?* Beſides, we are

to

to remember that Actions are to be eſtimated not barely by the Matter of them, but by the Mind and Spirit with which they are done. If a Son offends his Father in a trivial Matter, who behaves dutifully in Things of greater Importance, it will be excuſed. But if you ſuppoſe a Caſe ſo circumſtanced that the Son's Diſobedience will infer (not ſimply a Neglect, but) a *Contempt* of the Parent's Authority; be the Matter of the Offence what it will, it will deſerve the ſevereſt Reſentment. What the Son thinks to be a trivial Thing, and in common Eſtimation paſſes as ſuch, he may preſume the Father will think ſo too, without Warning to the contrary. But if the Father ſhould ſay, "Son, I expect your O-"bedience in this Point, or I will treat you "as a Rebel," and the Son ſhould preſumptuouſly offend, would you think it excuſable? Apply this to the preſent Caſe, and conſider it in Conjunction with its Circumſtances. The Motive to eat in *Eve*, we ſee, was preſumptuous; ſavouring of the Spirit of the Angels that fell; a Deſire to advance herſelf above the Rank to which God had created her, and to become like

unto

unto HIM. What was the Motive with *Adam*, the Scripture (expreſly) ſays not. He had no Communication with the Serpent, but was ſeduced by his Wife, as he pleads in his Defence, *Gen.* iii. 12. *The Woman whom thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* But as *Eve* was herſelf firſt prevailed upon to eat by what the Devil told her, it is moſt natural to be ſuppoſed, that with the ſame Bait ſhe tempted her Huſband; and that both were led away with the vain Hope of *being like Gods*, which ſeems to be implied in that ſevere Irony, ver. 22, which is pointed at both, *Behold! the Man is become* AS ONE OF US. However this be, it is certain that neither of them paid that Regard to the divine Precept that they ought to have paid, and that they were Sinners againſt a Law upon which God had laid the whole Weight of his Authority. Can any Thing be more ſolemn than theſe Words, *Of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou ſhalt not eat, for in the Day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die*, Gen. ii. 17. This was the *ſingle* Reſtraint he had put them under by any expreſs

preſs Prohibition, and the ſingle Inſtance by which (as Matters then ſtood) they were capable of giving Proof of their Duty and Allegiance; and therefore a Failure in this Point was a Failure in every Thing; an open Revolt from the God of Heaven, to truſt in a Creature inferior to themſelves. But why (you will aſk) did God lay this Reſtraint upon them, which he foreſaw would prove a Snare to them? And you may aſk if you pleaſe, why does God lay Reſtraints upon Us, foreſeeing that they will prove a Snare? All I can ſay to this Matter is, that if it was ſuitable to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God to appoint OUR Way to Happineſs and Glory through Temptations, it might have been as ſuitable to both, to take the ſame Method with our firſt Parents; and, when Nature as yet was too young to furniſh them with proper Matter of Trial, to give them a poſitive Law for that Purpoſe, and permit the Devil to do, what Luſt and Appetite at that Time could not. We know not what it was fit for God to do in either Caſe, otherwiſe than from the Experience of what he hath done; and it is notorious, that the Method

thod is equally either right or wrong in both. This Objection therefore concerns not Revelation ſpecially, but lies with equal Strength againſt Natural Religion; for all Religion ſtands upon the Principles of human Liberty, and human Imperfection, and that Sort of Providence which expoſes us to Trials and Temptations, which are the Exerciſe of Virtue, and through which we are to make our Way to our final Reward.

Let us then paſs on to the grand Objection of all, Why did the Sentence paſs upon ALL Men? Why was the whole human Race involved in the Puniſhment, who had no Share in the Sin? Some Divines hold, that *Adam* ſtood as the *Repreſentative* of his whole Race; and that *his* Act was *their* Act; *his* Sin *their* Sin. Whatever there is of Truth or Soundneſs in this Notion (in which Chriſtian Writers are not agreed) all I ſhall ſay to it at preſent is, that I have no Occaſion for it. It will be remembered, that I conſider *Death* in this Argument as meaning no more than the Period of this earthly Exiſtence. In this Senſe

Senſe *Adam* became mortal by his Tranſgreſſion, and in the ſame Senſe, and by the ſame Tranſgreſſion his Poſterity became ſo. And where is the Hardſhip of this? Suppoſe that inſtead of being made *ſubject* to Death, *Adam* had been doom'd to *inſtant* Death. Could the Sentence have been juſtified? No doubt it might. For if *Adam* had no Claim to Life but what ſtood upon his Obedience, the Condition ceaſing, the Claim muſt have fallen of courſe; and where there is no Claim there can be no Wrong. But if *Adam* had *inſtantly* been deſtroyed, the human Race could never have been; for the whole human Race was in his Loins. God might have created a new Head, it is true; but he would not have been in Juſtice bound to do it; for he was not in Juſtice bound to create *Adam*. If then God would have been juſtified in preventing the Exiſtence of the human Race by deſtroying its Head, undoubtedly he is juſtified in having done a leſs Thing: And it is certainly a leſs Thing to ſhorten the Period of the human Exiſtence, than not to ſuffer Mankind to be at all. The Embarraſſment in this Queſtion ariſes from

not diſtinguiſhing two the moſt diſtinct Things in the World, *Right*, and *Favour*: That one Man ſhould be deprived of his *Right* for another's Act, is unjuſt; as if a Magiſtrate ſhould hang up the Son for the Father's Treaſon: For every Subject has a Right to Protection till he hath forfeited it by Mal-conduct. But, that one Man ſhould, by another's Act, ſtand precluded from ſome *real Good* (ſuppoſed to be a Matter of mere *Grace* and *Favour*, in the Perſon by whom he ſtands precluded) is not unjuſt. We ſee Inſtances of it every Day in human Adminiſtrations, and in the ordinary Exerciſe of God's Providence, who hath ſo linked together the Intereſts of Men, that one Man can ſcarce do a wicked or a fooliſh Thing, but ſome other (innocent) Perſon will be the worſe for it. If a Lord grants an Eſtate to a Man and his Heirs, on Condition of certain Services to be performed; a Failure in ſuch Services will forfeit the Eſtate, not only to the Perſon himſelf, but to his Poſterity. The Reaſon is, becauſe the Children claiming only under the Father, and the Eſtate having reverted to

the Lord by the Father's Act, it is the ſame Thing as if no ſuch Grant had ever been made. So again; if a Man is guilty of Treaſon againſt the State, and the Law cuts him off; it may be to the great Loſs and Prejudice of his Family, who had no Share with him in the Offence. Whom will you blame in ſuch Caſes? A Lord does no Wrong in ſeizing an Eſtate when the Condition upon which he granted it, is not performed; and the Magiſtrate does his Duty in executing the Traytor who would ſubvert the Government. If there is any Offence in this, that the Innocent ſuffer with the Guilty; it muſt fall upon GOD, by whoſe Providence the Order of Things is ſo eſtabliſhed, that otherwiſe it cannot be. And ſo it is in Multitudes of other Caſes. When a Father diſinherits an undutiful Son; his Poſterity will ſuffer. When a Man ſpends his Eſtate in Luxury and Debauchery; his Children, his Friends, his Dependants, may all of them be Sufferers. This is the Reſult of the natural Order of Things, as eſtabliſhed by God; and therefore muſt be conſidered as the Act of God. You ſee then how far the Objection

tion reaches. It affects not only God's ſpecial Providence in this Caſe, but his univerſal Providence. And how do we juſtify God's univerſal Providence in this reſpect? Why thus—That "He is abſolute Maſter "of his own Gifts; liable to no Preſcrip- "tion in the Diſpoſal of them, but what "ariſes from his own Wiſdom." When a Child ſuffers by his Father's Vices, he is put into that State of Being in which Providence had a Right to have placed him, whether his Father had ſinned, or not. And ſo it is in all the other Inſtances. Now if this Anſwer will juſtify God in reſpect of his univerſal Providence; it will as well juſtify him in that particular Inſtance of his Providence now under our Conſideration: For try if you can find any Ground whereupon to build a Claim of Immortality, on the Behalf of *Adam* or his Poſterity, excepting only the free Grace and Favour of God; who might have made them all mortal from the very firſt, if he had ſo pleaſed. But if this Anſwer will not clear God's univerſal Providence, and you cannot think of a better; there is an End of Providence, and the Diſpute will come to a

Point to which my preſent Undertaking does not lead me to purſue it.

As to the MERCY of God (that glorious Perfection of his Nature, by which he moſt delights to be known to his Creatures) THAT muſt be ſought for in the Work of our REDEMPTION, to which I now willingly haſten. The general Idea of the REDEMPTION (as above laid down) is this, That *Chriſt* came to repair the Loſs ſuſtained by *Adam's* Fall, and to put away that Wrath and Condemnation that is due to all the perſonal Sins and Tranſgreſſions of Men. The Mercy of God did not make void his Juſtice, nor alter the Word that had once gone out of his Lips, *In the Day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die.* The Sentence of Mortality ſtood, and as yet ſtands, unreverſed; and (with ſome few Exceptions, to be accounted for in due Seaſon) from the Beginning of the Creation all Men have died, and will die; to be a ſtanding Monument of God's Diſpleaſure againſt Sin, ſo long as the Generations of Men ſhall laſt. But it is foretold, that a Time ſhall come when this State of Being

Being ſhall have an End; when *Chriſt*, who came to ſave us, ſhall come again to judge us; and when Death ſhall be deſtroyed by the Reſurrection from the Dead. *Chriſt* himſelf told his Diſciples, that he would *come again* to them, *John* xiv. 28. And when he cometh, he will *come in Glory with his holy Angels*, in order to Judgment, *Matt.* xvi. 27. And then will there be a great and amazing Change in the Face of Things; for *the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth alſo, and all the Works that are therein ſhall be burnt up*, 2 Pet. iii. 10. *Then ſhall appear the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, and the Dead ſhall hear his Voice, and they that hear ſhall live*, Matt. xxiv. 30. John v. 25. And it is to be obſerved, that this Privilege of Immortality belongs to all the Sons of *Adam*, who have accepted or ſhall accept the heavenly Call, by Faith and true Repentance; for the Scripture mentions all holy Men of old as *Heirs of the Promiſes*, as the *Sons* of God, and *Children of the Reſurrection*.

We ſee then fallen Man, by the Grace of God, a Candidate for Immortality. But here a Queſtion ariſes, What becomes of Man during this long Reign of Death? What is he in the intermediate Space between Death and the Reſurrection? Is he nothing? This is a very material Point; and let the Scripture ſpeak to it.

Of the Immortality of the Soul.

When God created *Adam*, it is ſaid, that he *formed* him *of the Duſt of the Ground, and breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life, and Man became a living Soul*, Gen. ii. 7. Had God formed an organical Body only, and not breathed into it the Breath of Life, it would not have been a Man, any more than an Image of Wax or Clay is a Man. The Notion of a Man therefore is, properly ſpeaking, the Notion of a Being, compounded of an organized Body, and a vital Principle; and conſequently when theſe two Principles are ſevered, the Man (properly ſpeaking) is no more. Such a Separation there is in Death, which is the Deſtruction,

Deſtruction, or Diſſolution of the organized Body.

But though, in this ſtrict philoſophical Senſe, the Man ceaſes when the Body dies, or is diſſolved; yet, if you will ſuppoſe that after this Diſſolution the vital Principle remains, you cannot ſay that he is *nothing*; for a Part of him remaineth, and, let me add, that Part of him which, being the Source of Life, is alſo the Source of Reaſon and Action, and conſtitutes his whole moral Nature. The Scripture repreſents the forming the organized Body, and the making Man a *living Soul*, as two diſtinct Actions. *God formed Man* (that is, the organized Body) *of the Duſt of the Ground, and breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life, and Man became* (that is, *by*, or in Virtue of this *Breathing* he became) *a living Soul.* The organized Body therefore, as ſuch, had no Life, but received it by the breathing in this vital Principle; which therefore is the Principle that reaſons, wills, and acts. It is *Life* (as it is in Man) that gives theſe Powers; and therefore that Prin-

ciple which in him conſtitutes Life, muſt be the Principle of theſe Operations.

Now I ſay, if you will ſuppoſe that, after the Body is diſſolved, this vital Principle ſtill remains; you may, with very little Variation from Propriety of Speech, ſay, that the Man lives even when he is dead; meaning, not the compounded Being called Man, but that vital Principle by which he had the Knowledge and Underſtanding of a Man; and was capable of obeying and ſinning againſt God. If you were to ſuppoſe this vital Principle to be deſtroyed, and the organized Body to remain; you would with leſs Propriety call that the Man: And yet we call it ſo every Day, and the Scripture calls it ſo in this very very Place. *God formed* MAN *of the Duſt of the Ground, and breathed into his Noſtrils*, &c. *and* MAN *became a living Soul*; where it is plain that by *Man* is meant the organized Body; for this, and this only, it was, that was *formed of the Duſt of the Ground.* But when we ſpeak of Man as a moral Agent, we conſtantly mean the Mind [e], and

[e] Neque NOS, CORPORA ſumus; neque ego TIBI

not

not the Body. For it is the Mind alone that acts, and which constitutes (as I said before) the whole moral Nature.

Let us take this then *ex hypothesi*, That the Soul survives the Body; and we shall come up to the full Sense of Scripture. The Notion of a Redemption plainly supposes it. For who are to be redeemed? Why, the Race that sinned. But Millions of them are dead, and all will die; and if the Soul dies with the Body, the whole Race will be extinct, and there will be none to be redeemed. God might form new Bodies from the Dust, and again *breathe* into them *the Breath of Life*. But these would be *new Men*, and not the *old Race* that sinned. But it yields a clear, consistent Account of this Matter, if we say, that the Souls of the Dead remain in the Hand of God, waiting for the Resurrection, when the Time appointed by his Providence shall come. This is the Christian

hæc dicens, CORPORI tuo dico.——Nam Corpus quidem quasi vas est, aut aliquod animi receptaculum. Ab ANIMO tuo quicquid agitur, id agitur a TE. *Cic. Tuscular.* i. 22.

Doctrine;

Doctrine ; which has been ſo univerſally received, and is of ſuch high Antiquity, that it ſeems to me impoſſible to give any Account of its Riſe, otherwiſe than by ſaying, either that it carries with it a kind of Self-evidence to the Mind (as moral Truths do) or that it was a Part of ſome original Revelation given to Mankind. In the Old Teſtament we meet with nothing expreſs concerning it, till after *Moſes*. But *Solomon* plainly ſays, *The Duſt ſhall return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit ſhall return to God who gave it*, Eccleſ. xii. 7. And the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* (who may be admitted as an Evidence of the Faith of the *Jewiſh* Church at that Time) ſays, *The Souls of the Righteous are in the Hand of God, and there ſhall no Torment touch them. In the Sight of the Unwiſe they ſeemed to die—but they are in peace—and their* HOPE *is full of* IMMORTALITY, Chap. iii. 1—4. It is in reference to this Notion (I conceive) that thoſe Paſſages in the moſt early Times will be beſt interpreted where Death is deſcribed by the Expreſſions of *giving up the Ghoſt*, and being *gathered unto their* FATHERS[f];

[f] See *Exam. of Warburton.*

and

and (according to our Saviour's Obſervation) that when God appeared to *Moſes*, he ſpake of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, though *dead*, as yet *living*, Luke xx. 37, 38. But that which ſufficeth for my preſent Purpoſe is, that our Saviour himſelf is clear and expreſs in this Doctrine: *All live unto him*, that is, unto *God*, with whom the Spirits of juſt Men live, though their Bodies be diſſolved. Again; *Fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul*, Matt. x. 28. This is ſaying in ſo many Words, that when the Body is dead, the Soul yet lives; and whither it goes, he very plainly ſhews in his Anſwer to the penitent Thief upon the Croſs, *To Day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe*, Luke xxiii. 43. In which (for the main Subſtance of it) he juſtifies the Notion of the *Jews*, who believed that the Souls of good Men, as ſoon as they were ſeparated from the Body, went into *Paradiſe*, into *Abraham's Boſom*, as it was called, as you ſee in the Parable of the *rich Man* and *Lazarus*, Luke xvi. This was going *to God*; for it was going to the Place of Happineſs which God had prepared for

them. And therefore the firſt Martyr, St. *Stephen*, when the *Jews* were ſtoning him, *called upon God, and ſaid, Lord Jeſus, receive my Spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Which was copying the Example of *Chriſt* himſelf, who, when he was upon the Croſs, *cried with a loud Voice, and ſaid, Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*, Luke xxiii. 46.

So clear is the Scripture in this Point; which I have thus briefly touched (for more a great deal might be ſaid) to guard againſt a weak Notion of ſome Chriſtians, That when the Body dies, the Soul paſſes into a State of Sleep, or Inſenſibility, till the Reſurrection. And now that the Doctrine is thus ſtated, we are to conſider how it ſtands in the View of Reaſon.

And, in the firſt Place, I do not take upon me to ſay, that the Immortality of the Soul hath the Evidence of moral Truths. The many Diſputes that have been raiſed upon this Queſtion, by thinking Men in all Ages, ſhew the contrary. Nor do I pretend that, ſeparate from all Notices by Revelation,

Revelation, this Doctrine can be eſtabliſhed to the Degree of Demonſtration, upon natural Principles. But what I ſay is (and it is enough for me to ſay) that no ſuch *Exception* lies againſt this Doctrine from the Principles of Reaſon, but that, ſuppoſing it propoſed to us as a Matter of Revelation, it may and ought to be admitted as credible: And I may go yet further in this Point, and ſay, that ſo far is it from being incredible, that the Soul ſhould ſurvive the Body, and be happy or miſerable in a ſeparate State, that all our natural Preſumptions run ſtrongly in favour of this Doctrine; and if this can be made appear, it will ſhew a beautiful affecting Harmony between Reaſon and Revelation, each lending a helping Hand to ſtrengthen and ſupport the other, and both conſpiring together to enforce upon us that Sort of Conduct which is worthy of ourſelves.

I have before obſerved, that the Act of God in forming the organized Body of the firſt Man, and that of his making him to be a living Soul, are repreſented in Scripture as two diſtinct Acts. And the different

ent Language in which each of them is ſpoken of, ſeems to ſuggeſt to us, that theſe two Principles, the Body and the Soul, are of very diſtinct Natures. Of the firſt it is ſaid, that God *formed Man of the Duſt of the Ground*; of the latter that he *breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life*. The like Diſtinction is preſerved in the Book of *Job*, Chap. xxxiii. ver. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me Life*. The Soul then is the *Breath* of the Almighty: *Divinæ particula Auræ*, as the Ancients called it, in Words borrowed (perhaps) from the Old Teſtament; which Notion ſome of them ſeem to have carried ſo far as to ſuppoſe that it is ſtrictly and properly a Part of the divine Nature. This, no doubt, is very unphiloſophical and abſurd. But it may eaſily be underſtood, that the Soul is a Subſtance ſo nearly allied to the divine Nature, beyond what we can conceive of material Subſtance, as to be not unfitly repreſented to our Underſtanding, as if it were a Part of it; and this Idea the Expreſſion of God's *breathing* into Man the vital Principle very aptly conveys: For he that breathes

breathes upon another, communicates to him ſomething from himſelf. The Expreſſion is metaphorical, as the Act of *Chriſt* was ſymbolical, when, imparting his Spirit to his Apoſtles, he BREATHED *on them and ſaid, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt*, John xx. 22. It is obſervable, that though all Animals have in them *the Breath of Life*, yet of Man alone it is ſaid, that *God* breathed into him; and if to this you add, that he is expreſly ſaid to be made *in the Image* of God, and *after his Likeneſs*, you will hardly help ſuppoſing, that there is in Man ſome Principle ſuperior, both to ſluggiſh Matter, and to the vital Principle in Brutes. I do not advance this as *Evidence* (which at preſent is not my Province) but only to explain what I take to be the Scripture Senſe of this Matter: And I now go on to ſhew, that whether the Scripture ſays or ſays not, that the Soul is an immaterial Subſtance, it is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe it to be ſo. We can no otherwiſe judge of the Nature of the Soul, than by its Powers and Faculties, which are, *thinking*, *reaſoning*, *willing*, *acting*; and theſe in the very Idea of them are clearly diſtinct from the

the Idea of Matter, and of all its known Properties. Take a Grain of Sand, and consider what you will find in it. It is extended and takes up Room—it may be divided, and crumbled to Pieces—it moves not itself, but may be moved from Place to Place, and mingled and compounded with other Bodies. More than this of it you cannot conceive. And yet neither Extension, nor Division, nor Motion, nor Composition, are THOUGHT, or any thing like it. What is true of one Grain of Sand, is as true of all the Matter in the Universe put together. Nothing can result from it but Division and Motion, and this by a Force acting *ab extra*. But move or divide as you please, you will not be able to produce one single Act of Judgment or Will.

If we will carefully distinguish Life, as it subsists in Man, into its several Parts, we shall easily perceive, where the Powers of Matter end, and where the *probable* (for I go no farther at present) Necessity of calling in the Aid of an immaterial Principle begins. There is then, in the first Place

(for

(for I begin with the loweſt in Dignity) the *vegetative* Life, by which the Body grows and is nouriſhed. This we have in common with the Plants and Trees. There is in the next place the *animal* Life, by which we hear, and ſee, and feel, and taſte, and ſmell, and act, and move from Place to Place. This we have in common with all other Creatures called Animals. And there is, in the laſt place, the *rational* Life, by which we reaſon, and deliberate, and debate, and conclude, and reſolve; and this we have (in a Degree at leaſt) peculiar to ourſelves.

Now as to the firſt, the *vegetative* Life, we eaſily apprehend how that may be begun and carried on, by Matter variouſly divided and compounded, and moved by an external Force. For take this Species of Life as it is in Plants, and what is it? Why, the Plant is formed by the Hand of the Almighty Creator, with various Organs to receive the Subſtance of its Nouriſhment from the Earth; which being driven up by the Heat of the Sun, or other Fire (if any other Fire there be) diſperſed throughout the whole material Syſtem, fills

up the ſeveral Pipes or Channels prepared for its Reception, and extends them into Buds, and Leaves, and Branches, and Fruit. There is nothing more than this in the *vegetative* Life, as it ſubſiſts in Man. Our Food is taken in at the Mouth, and Stomach, where it is divided and digeſted, to be conveyed into the Arteries and Veins, for the Supply of Blood, and other Juices neceſſary for Life. All this is done by an *external* Force, external (I mean) in reſpect of thoſe Subſtances by which we grow and are nouriſhed. The Hands give the external Force by which the Mouth is fed. The Stomach gives the external Force, by which the Food is digeſted, and made fit for Nouriſhment. And the Heart gives the external Force, by which it is driven into the ſeveral Pipes and Channels of the Body. But as in all this there is nothing of *Self-motion*, ſo neither is there any Thing that has any Affinity with the Ideas of Senſe, or Perception, or Underſtanding, or Will, any more than there would be, if you ſhould force Water through a Syringe, or ſtrain any Thing through a Sieve; or than there is in the growing of a Plant, or of a Tree.

There

There is nothing then in the mere *vegetative* Life, from whence to derive the *animal* and the *rational* Powers. And yet it ſhould ſeem, that the vegetative Life comprehends the whole of what is to be done by Matter. For conceive to yourſelf ſome diſtinct Principle (and ſuch a Principle there muſt needs be ; becauſe, as I have ſaid, theſe Powers cannot reſult from the compounded Motions of the Blood and other Juices ; ſuppoſe, I ſay, that there is ſome diſtinct Principle or Subject) in which the *animal* and the *rational* Powers have their proper Reſidence ; ſtill, if you ſuppoſe that Principle to be Matter, you are advanced not one Step forwarder ; for conceive Matter in any ſhape, and you will never find in it the Idea of Self-motion, or Thought. But if you ſuppoſe that Principle to be *immaterial*, ſuch a Principle may have in itſelf thoſe and all other Powers, that conſtitute the *animal* and the *rational* Life ; and if it be ſo united to the Body as to communicate Impreſſions to it, and to receive Impreſſions back again from it, by the Intervention of the organical Parts ; it will ac-

count for every Effect we ſee in the *animal* and the *rational* World. If you find any Difficulty in comprehending how a Principle diſtinct in Nature from Matter, can be ſo united to Matter ; I anſwer, that it is ſo difficult as to be impoſſible. But this doth not hinder but that the Thing may be, which it is at leaſt as eaſy to conceive, as it is to conceive that Matter may think. If God is not Matter (as every one who is not an Atheiſt, muſt be ſuppoſed to believe) we have then Evidence from Fact, that there is ONE immaterial Subſtance, that has in himſelf every Power that is in Man, in infinite Perfection ; and if we, and all the material Creation are his Workmanſhip, we have alſo Evidence, that an immaterial Subſtance may and does communicate Impreſſions to Matter. But we have no Proof from one ſingle Inſtance in the World, that Matter has either Thought or Self-motion. All our Experience and Obſervation lies the other Way.

In conſequence of this Reaſoning, I think it muſt be admitted as credible, that the Soul of Man is a Principle in Nature diſtinct

distinct from the Body, having in itself the Powers of Self-motion, Understanding, Will, *&c.* and the Consequence will then be this, that the Dissolution of the one doth not infer the Destruction of the other. That when the Body dies the Soul may yet live, a thinking, rational Being, and naturally will do so, for any Thing that the mere Dissolution of the Body can effect to the contrary. There is nothing in Observation and Experience to contradict this Notion, but what arises from Prejudice and Want of Attention. When our Friend or our Neighbour is dead, we see nothing but a cold Lump of Clay, and thence it seems to us, as if there were a full End of him. But if the Soul is a Spirit not to be seen, or heard, or handled; sensible Conviction of its Existence (supposing it yet to exist) is a Degree of Evidence not to be had. We know not that we ourselves have Souls, otherwise than by our own Consciousness. Nor can we tell that another Man has a Soul, but because we discern in him the proper Acts of a Spiritual Substance. How then should our Senses inform us, that the Soul lives when the Body

is dead? We see the dead Body, and that is all we can see. But where the Soul goes, our Reason, or the Word of God, alone can shew us; and if, as the Scripture says, it goes *to God*, it is, from the very Moment of its Separation, become the Inhabitant of a new World, and hath no more visible Communication with this, than a Man removed into, and settled in, a foreign Country hath with the Place of his Nativity.

But this is trivial. The strongest Prejudices (which no doubt have great Weight with many) arise from hence, that we know nothing of the Powers and Operations of the Soul, but from what appears of them in this State of Union with the Body; and because we find that they are more vigorous, or more languid, or (sometimes) quite suspended, according as the bodily Faculties are disposed; we are apt to conclude that these Operations so much depend upon the Body, that they will cease when the Body dies. An Infant has not the Reason and Understanding of a Man; but as the Body grows in Strength and

and Stature, the Faculties of the Mind improve with it. And when by Ripeneſs of Age theſe Faculties are come to full Maturity, they may be impaired, or loſt again, by Diſeaſes of various Kinds. But it is very eaſy to conceive (if we will attend) that though the Soul has theſe Faculties in itſelf, and independent of the Body, yet ſo long as it is in a State of Union with the Body, the Uſe and Exerciſe of them may depend upon the Diſpoſition of the corporeal Inſtrument: And this is all that we do or can experience, that when the Body is ſo or ſo indiſpoſed, the Exerciſe of theſe Faculties ceaſes, or is impaired, not that the Powers themſelves are deſtroyed. If you tye me faſt Hand and Foot, ſo that I cannot ſtir, the Exerciſe of my locomotive Faculty is ſtopped; but the Faculty itſelf remains, as you will ſoon be convinced, if you untie the Cord and let me looſe. If a Man falls into a deep Sleep, or is ſeized with an Apoplexy; Senſe and Motion is loſt; but when he awakes, or the Diſtemper is removed, he has all his Faculties entire as he had before. You will not ſay in this Caſe that the Soul retires a while from

the Body, and then returns again ; but that the Soul, ſtill in the Body, recovers the Uſe of its Faculties.

Theſe (and numberleſs other) Inſtances ſhew, that whilſt the Exerciſe of the Faculties of the Soul is loſt, the Powers themſelves may and do remain. Well ; but ſuppoſe, that, inſtead of awaking or recovering from his Apoplexy, the Man dies ; how will the Caſe ſtand then ? When a Man recovers from an Apoplexy, or awakes from Sleep, the Soul finds its proper Inſtrument, and therefore recovers the Uſe of its Faculties ; but when he dies the Inſtrument is removed :— And what follows ? Will you ſay, that therefore the Exerciſe of its Faculties is at a full End ? This were to ſay (what no Mortal can prove) that becauſe, during its State of Union with the Body, the Soul cannot act without the Intervention of the corporeal Inſtrument, therefore neither can it act without it in a State of ſeparate Exiſtence. If it be poſſible to conceive, that God might have created a Soul endued with Faculties, or Powers not capable of being drawn forth into Action, but in Virtue, or by the Aid, of its Union,

Union with the Body; it is much more natural to think, that as the Soul has Powers, or Faculties, proper to its own distinct Nature, so it hath Ways of using, or exercising them proper to its own distinct Nature. There are some kinds of Perceptions which have a peculiar Relation to the *animal* Life, such as Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, Tasting, and Smelling; and whether the Soul is capable of having exactly the same Sensations otherwise than by the bodily Organs, may be made a Question, though, I think, it is no very difficult one. But Thought, and Reason, and Will, have no special Relation to this State of Existence; and as in the Use of these Faculties, we want not the Interposition of any external Medium, but only (it may be) such a Disposition of the Brain as will not obstruct their Operations; we may very reasonably suppose, that when all Relation to the Body shall cease, and the Soul comes to exist separately, and independently by itself, these Operations will be so far from ceasing, that they will be the more free and unconfined [g].

[g] Facile intelligi potest, animum et videre, et audire, non eas partes quæ quasi fenestræ sunt animi——

You

You may take your Notion of this, if you pleaſe, from the different States of the animal Body, as it ſubſiſts in the Womb, and out of it. Whilſt we are in the Womb our Senſes are locked up, and we are ſuſtained only by Communication from the Mother. But when we are born into the World, our Senſes immediately begin to open, and we are fed and nouriſhed by proper Inſtruments of our own. The Death of the Body may be the Birth of the Soul, to its proper, natural Life, the Rudiments of which it received in the Body, as the Body itſelf received the Beginnings of the animal Life, by its Formation in the Womb. And as the Body when born hath a different kind of Life, from that which it had in the Womb; ſo may the Soul, when its earthly Incloſure ſhall be diſſolved.

Atque ea profecto [omnia quæ ad animum referuntur] tum multo puriora, et dilucidiora cernentur, cum, quo natura fert, liber animus pervenerit. Nam nunc quidem—foramina illa, quæ patent ad animum a corpore——terrenis concretiſque corporibus ſunt intercepta quodammodo. Cum autem nihil erit præter animum, nulla res objecta impediet, quo minus percipiat quale quidque ſit. *Cicer. Tuſculan.* i. 20.

It may have new Ways of Thinking, new Ways of perceiving; and if it has not the ſame Senſations of Pleaſure and Pain that it has in this Life, it may have others ſuited to its State of ſeparate Exiſtence; and there may be as much Difference in point of Excellency between one Life and the other, as there is between the Life of an *Embryo*, and that of a perfect, grown, Man.

You take notice, no doubt, that all along in this Argument I have proceeded, as if the Soul, after its Separation from the Body, would remain a pure Spirit, abſolutely ſtript of all Matter. But it ſhould juſt be obſerved, that many of the old Philoſophers, and ſome of the ancient Fathers of the Chriſtian Church, have maintained, that beſides the groſs, organical Body, the Soul has another, thin, etherial, Body, by which the Intercourſe with the organical Body is carried on during its State of Union with it; and that this thin, etherial Body is not diſſolved, when the groſs, organical Body is diſſolved, but paſſes together with the Soul into a ſeparate State, as its proper *Vehicle*, by the Help of which it is capable of

of receiving all the Senſations of Pleaſure and Pain, which it had whilſt united to the Body. I ſee nothing impoſſible, or unphiloſophical in this Notion; but I have no need of it; and as it does not appear [h] ſuf-

[h] *Origen* (whom the learned Dr. *Cudworth* * inclines to follow) thought he ſaw this Notion in that Paſſage of St. *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* v. 1. *We know that if our earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle* [ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους] *ſhall be diſſolved*, &c. where he will have the οἰκία [the *Houſe*] to ſignify the groſs *Body*; and the σκῆνος [the *Tabernacle*] to mean that thin, airy *Vehicle*, which he ſuppoſes to be the *inward Integument* of the Soul. But I ſee no Ground for this Interpretation. It is an odd Deſcription of the animal Body, to call it the Houſe of the σκῆνος. It is as if you ſhould call a Man's Houſe the Houſe of his *Shirt*, or the Houſe of his *Coat*. Beſides, this Interpretation ill agrees with what follows, ver. 4. *We that are* [ἐν τῷ σκήνει] *in the Tabernacle, do groan, being burdened* &c. An Expreſſion which well deſcribes the State of the *Living* whilſt the Soul is cloathed in this earthly Body; not of the *Dead*, when it is uncloathed and covered only with the airy Vehicle. And yet, according to this Notion, the *Dead* as well as the *Living* are ἐν τῷ σκήνει. It remains then that we underſtand the σκῆνος (as our Tranſlators underſtood it) to ſignify the groſs, earthly Body, which St. *Peter* calls σκήνωμα, a Word of the ſame Import, and which is alſo *Tabernacle* in our Tranſ-

* *Intellect. Syſt.* p. 819. 4^to^ Edit.

ficiently

ficiently founded in Scripture, I ſhall enter no farther into the Conſideration of it, but go on to ſomething which, I foreſee, may be urged in the way of Objection to the foregoing Argument, *viz.* That it reaches to Brutes and other Animals, as well as to Men. For theſe have in them *the Breath of Life* [i]; theſe have Self-motion, Senſe, and Will; and, in a certain Degree, Reaſon too: And if theſe are not the Properties of mere Matter, but ſuppoſe an immaterial Principle, it will follow, that they too have immaterial Souls. I admit the Concluſion. Brutes, *&c.* have immaterial Souls as well as Men, and for the ſame Reaſons. But if you would go on, and charge it as an Inconvenience upon this Doctrine, that therefore the Souls of Brutes are immortal too, this Concluſion will not follow. For I do not argue, that becauſe the Souls of Men are immaterial, therefore (abſolutely) they are immortal; but that

lation, 2 *Pet.* i. 13. *Our earthly Houſe of the Tabernacle*; is the ſame Thing as if it had been ſaid, *Our earthly Houſe* WHICH IS a Tabernacle; or, *the earthly Tabernacle in which* WE DWELL.

[i] *Gen.* vii. 15. *& alibi.*

becauſe

becauſe they are immaterial, therefore they *may be* immortal ; or, at moſt, that, naturally, or without ſome Act of God intervening, beſides the mere Diſſolution of the Body, they are ſo. But the Certainty, in Point of Fact, that the Souls of Men are immortal, I lay upon the Scripture Evidence ; and to make Way for this Evidence, I have undertaken to ſhew (and, I hope, I have fully proved) that the Doctrine is, in the Nature of it, credible ; and if you will accept of the ſame Concluſion in reſpect of the Souls of Brutes, you are welcome to it. Their Souls, as well as the Souls of Men, may live in a ſeparate State, for any thing that the mere Diſſolution of their Bodies will infer to the contrary ; and had the Scriptures declared that they would, there would have been the ſame Reaſon for our Belief in reſpect of the one as in reſpect of the other. But as the Scriptures ſay nothing of the Souls of Brutes, whether they are or are not immortal ; I determine nothing poſitive on either Side of the Queſtion. They may live in a ſeparate State, either in other Bodies, or out of Bodies ; or they may be deſtroyed when theſe Bodies

dies die, as having ſerved the full End of their Creation. For though the mere Diſſolution of the Bodies in which they reſide will not deſtroy them; God may deſtroy them by an Act of his Power, who, as he hath formed animal Bodies to laſt but for a determinate Space of Time, may in like manner determine the Exiſtence of the Souls by which thoſe Bodies are animated, to the ſame Period, if it ſeemeth good to his infinite Wiſdom.

We have purſued the Argument ſo far as to have ſhewn it credible, that this preſent State is not the laſt State of Man, but that there may be a State after this, in which we ſhall live (at leaſt in *Soul)* to be either happy or otherwiſe. We may now advance to the next Step, which is to ſhew, that there is ſomething in Nature and Reaſon which prepares us to expect ſuch a State. We may, in the firſt place, form no light Preſumption from the Inſufficiency of this World to complete the human Happineſs. It ſeems reaſonable to think, that God hath ſuited the State of every Species of Beings to the Nature which he hath imparted

parted to them; and, for ought we can tell, he hath done ſo in reſpect of all the Creatures below us. All inanimate Bodies are furniſhed with Powers ſuited to the Effects they are intended to produce, in the Works of Providence. All the various Tribes of Animals have Faculties and Propenſities that correſpond to the preſent State of their Exiſtence; which, ſo far as we are able to judge, fills up the whole Meaſure of their Deſires. Give a Horſe his Eaſe and his Provender, and he thinks of nothing farther. He knows no Want if he feels no Pain. But Man launches out into Futurity; is ever driving forward to extend his Enjoyments; and never comes at that Period where he can ſay, that there is (abſolutely) nothing left for him to wiſh; nothing beyond his preſent Acquiſitions, which if he had, he would be ſtill better pleaſed. Happineſs is what we all covet, and it ever ſeems to us incomplete, and, our Deſires and Cravings only conſidered, it really is, and muſt be ſo. But it ſhould ſeem, that if God had intended us only for this World, he would not have implanted in

in us thoſe Propenſities which the World itſelf is not able to ſatisfy.

But the ſtrongeſt Argument ariſes from God's moral Government, as it concerns the Diſtribution of Good and Evil. We have before ſaid, that God, as ſovereign Lord of the Univerſe, was originally at Liberty to aſſign to Man any Degree or Duration of Happineſs that he thought fit. But it is nevertheleſs true, that when he had determined him to a State of Being, in which his very Nature made him accountable to his Creator; he at the ſame time made himſelf, in ſome ſort, accountable to his Creatures, who, if they owe him Homage, have an equitable Right to expect that their Happineſs ſhall bear Proportion to the Value of their Obedience, as their State may be conſidered comparatively with reſpect to the State of other Beings of the ſame Rank and Order. But this is not ſeen in this World. Good Men are not always better provided for than bad ones, but many times a great deal worſe; at leaſt it *appears* to us ſo to be. But it may reaſonably be expected, that God will at ſome

Time or other juſtify himſelf to all reaſonable Creatures, by making it plain and viſible, that Happineſs follows Virtue as its proper Reward; and this will then, and can then only appear, if when this mortal Life ſhall have an End, in which *all Things happen alike to all*, another State of Being ſhall take place, in which Virtue ſhall be ſo much the more eminently rewarded, as it has been left undiſtinguiſhed in this.

As to the Puniſhment of bad Men, I purpoſely reſerve what I have to ſay to it, to another Place, where the Subject will be more properly handled. But the Argument, as thus ſtated, leads directly to a future State for good ones; the Thing that the Doctrine of the Redemption (which I am now explaining) ſingly points at: For Redemption is Redemption to immortal *Happineſs*. But let it be obſerved, that this Argument will not go ſo far as to aſcertain to us IMMORTALITY. The Retribution of a future State may be an eternal Retribution; but the mere Notion of a Retribution does not involve in it the Notion of Eternity;

Eternity; becauſe a temporary Retribution may ſerve to juſtify God's Providence, for any thing that we can tell to the contrary. One Stage of Being after this, of like, or even leſs Duration, would perhaps ſet all Inequalities right. It is very true that we can ſee no Cauſe why God ſhould deſtroy good Men, when he has once taken them to their Reward, and perhaps probable Reaſons might be thought of to ſhew, that he will not; but, I think, that Certainty in this Caſe muſt ſtand upon ſome higher Principle.—But let me add one Obſervation more, which is, that neither does this Argument determine, whether good Men ſhall have their Reward in the Body or out of the Body; becauſe a Retribution may be underſtood equally, upon either Suppoſition. If it were ſuppoſed that the Soul, after its Separation from the Body, exiſts in a State of Inactivity, or Inſenſibility, till the Reſurrection unites it again to the Body, then to receive its Reward; or if you ſuppoſe that it immediately enters upon its Reward, in a State of ſeparate Exiſtence, never to be again united to the Body; the Difficulties upon Providence

that ariſe from the unequal Diſtribution of Good and Evil in this Life, will be equally anſwered. But *Chriſt* hath joined both Ways together, and put good Men in Poſſeſſion of their Reward, immediately after Death, in a State of ſeparate Exiſtence, fully to be completed afterwards, when the End of all Things ſhall come, and the Body ſhall be raiſed from its Duſt to immortal Life.

It may be ſuggeſted perhaps, that the Doctrines of a ſeparate State, and of the Reſurrection of the Body, ſtand not well together; for that the one takes away all Uſe or Neceſſity of the other: And if you conſider the next World, ſimply under the Notion of a State of Retribution, in reſpect of the Good or Evil done or ſuffered in this Life, ſo indeed it will appear. But you are to remember, that the preciſe End or Purpoſe of the Reſurrection, is to reſtore that original State to which *Adam* was created; which is not effected by the State of ſeparate Exiſtence. For to exiſt in Soul only, is not the ſame Thing as to exiſt in Soul and Body together. The one is the

State

State of a Man; the other the State of a pure and ſimple Spirit. If you ſhould go on and aſk, Why it was neceſſary that Man ſhould be reſtored to his original State of Soul and Body? or, Why a State of ſeparate Exiſtence, extended through all Eternity, would not have done as well? This is a Queſtion that I cannot anſwer, nor am I concerned to anſwer it. I may as reaſonably aſk you, Why God created us Men, and not Spirits? and if I ſhould, you will as little be able to anſwer me. But as every one, who thinks worthily of the ſupreme Being, will ſay in this Caſe, that HE beſt knows how to order the Workmanſhip of his own Hands; I may, I hope, be admitted to the Benefit of the ſame Plea, and be juſtified in preſuming, that as there was Wiſdom (founded upon Reaſons reſpecting God's univerſal Government) in aſſigning to Man that State of Being at firſt; there is likewiſe the ſame Wiſdom in reſtoring it, when it had been loſt by Tranſgreſſion. Lay this down, and conſider withal, that Death was to have a Time for his Dominion, and that all Mankind were to paſs their Probation before the Time of Reſto-

ration ſhould come; this will infer an intermediate State, in which the Souls of good Men muſt either not be at all, or remain in a State of Inſenſibility, or go to God. The firſt was impoſſible; becauſe then (as I have before obſerved) the ſame Race that was loſt would not have been reſtored. The ſecond might have been if God had ſo thought fit; but no Man can ſay, that he hath not dealt more graciouſly with us in chuſing the laſt Method, which immediately after Death places good Men in the Comforts of his Preſence, waiting for a State of more exalted Bliſs (for ſuch no doubt it will be) when the preſent State of Things ſhall have an End.

Of the Reſurrection of the Body.

But this, which ſeemed *a Thing incredible* to ſome of old, may alſo now ſeem incredible, *that God ſhould raiſe the Dead:* And this is the Point I am next to ſpeak to. Many are the Cavils that have been raiſed againſt this Doctrine, by ſceptical Men; to get rid of which, and at the ſame time to ſhew, in how ſtrict and perfect a Senſe the Reſurrection will be the Reſtoration of Man's original State, nothing more ſeems needful;

ful, than to ſtate the Notion of it, as it lies before us in the Scripture.

It ſhould be obſerved then, in the firſt Place, that all Men (abſolutely) ſhall not die. So ſays St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xv. 51. *We ſhall not all ſleep*, i. e. We ſhall not all *die*. He ſays indeed, in the ſame Chapter, ver. 22, that *in Adam* ALL *die*. But this means no more, than that by the Sin of *Adam* all *became mortal*; or that, all who have died or ſhall die, have died, or ſhall die, through his Tranſgreſſion; for in fact, it is true that all Men (abſolutely) have not died. *Enoch* never died; *Eliſha* never died; both were taken up alive into Heaven, to be Examples to thoſe Ages of God's Goodneſs to extraordinary Piety, and an Inſtruction to Mankind, that this State is not the only State intended for us. And as there have been thoſe who have not died, ſo again there will be thoſe who ſhall not die; and theſe are thoſe who ſhall be found alive when *Chriſt* comes, and when Death's Dominion ſhall be at a full End. Hence *Chriſt* is ſtyled the Judge of *the Quick and the Dead*, 1 Pet. iv. 5. that is, of thoſe who ſhall have died before

his Coming, and of thoſe who ſhall be found alive upon the Earth when he comes, and who ſhall *not* die. And that St. *Paul* intended this Diſtinction, when he ſaid, *We ſhall not all ſleep*, is clear from what we read, 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 15. *This we ſay unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the Coming of the Lord, ſhall not prevent them which are aſleep—For the Dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt. Then we which are alive, and remain ſhall be caught up together with them, in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air, and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord.* We ſee here that the Apoſtle makes a very plain Diſtinction between the *Dead*, and thoſe who ſhould be *alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord:* And what he delivers as *from the Lord*, is, that they who thus remain, ſhall not *prevent* thoſe who are dead, that is, ſhall not *go before* them into Heaven. The Dead in *Chriſt* muſt firſt riſe, and then both the *Quick* and the *Dead* ſhall all go *together*. But how ſhall they go? Cloathed in *Bodies*; but not in *mortal* and *corruptible* Bodies. For *Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither*

neither doth Corruption inherit Incorruption, as he ſpeaks 1 *Cor.* xv. 50. What then? It preſently follows, *We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed.* ALL ſhall be *changed*, both the *Living* and the *Dead.* The *Dead* from their Corruption to Incorruption; and the *Living* from their mortal to an immortal Nature, as it is ſaid ver. 23. *This corruptible muſt put on Incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on Immortality.* The Bodies of the Dead ſhall ſpring forth from their Duſt, as from their Seed and firſt Principle; not Fleſh, and Blood, and Skin, and Bones, as they were before, but Bodies of another kind. *That which thou ſoweſt, is not quickened except it die; and that which thou ſoweſt, thou ſoweſt not that Body that ſhall be, but bare Grain; it may chance, of Wheat, or of ſome other Grain; but God giveth it a Body.—So alſo is the Reſurrection of the Dead. It is ſown in Corruption, it is raiſed in Incorruption: It is ſown in Diſhonour, it is raiſed in Glory: It is ſown in Weakneſs, it is raiſed in Power: It is ſown a natural Body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual Body*, ver. 36—44. What the *natural* Body is, we all know. What the

the *ſpiritual* Body ſhall be, we cannot tell. But ſomething it will be, ſuitable to the ſpiritual and heavenly State, as theſe Bodies are to the natural and earthly. This Doctrine is alſo contained in that Paſſage, *Philip.* iii. 21. *The Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall change our vile Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body.* Chriſt was raiſed in his natural and earthly Body, becauſe it was neceſſary to ſhew himſelf alive to his Apoſtles, who were to be Witneſſes to all the World of the Truth of his Reſurrection. But when his Work on Earth was finiſhed, even *whilſt they beheld him, he was taken up*, into Heaven, *and a Cloud received him out of their Sight*, Acts i. 9. And then it was that he put on his *glorious* Body, according to the *Likeneſs* of which, the Bodies of thoſe who ſhall be found alive at his ſecond Coming, and ſhall be thought worthy of the Reſurrection, ſhall be faſhioned. For ſo ſays the ſame Apoſtle in the Paſſage above-cited; *Then we which are alive and remain, ſhall be caught up in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air; and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord*; that is (for ſo we are to underſtand it) not in

earthly

earthly and *corruptible* Bodies, but in *glorious* Bodies, or in *earthly* and *corruptible* Bodies *made*, or become, *heavenly* and *incorruptible*. And all that our Apoſtle has delivered, concerning this *Change* of the *earthly* into a *heavenly* Nature, agrees with what *Chriſt* himſelf ſays, *Luke* xx. 35. *They which ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain the Reſurrection from the Dead, neither marry nor are given in Marriage, neither can they die any more; for they are* EQUAL *unto the* ANGELS.

The Doctrine of the Reſurrection thus ſtated, the common Objections againſt the Poſſibility of it will immediately vaniſh. For theſe Objections are grounded upon the Suppoſition, that the Idea of a Reſurrection implies an entire Reſtitution of that whole Maſs of which our Bodies are compoſed; the ſeveral Parts of which (ſay the Objectors) are in [k] a perpetual Flux; and

[k] All that is certain in this Matter is, that the Blood and other Juices of the Body are in a perpetual Flux. But, properly ſpeaking, the Blood and Juices are no more conſtituent Parts of the Body, than Water, or any other Liquor, is a conſtituent Part of the Pipe or Veſſel which contains it. If you will ſuppoſe the Veſſels, that is, the ſolid Parts of the Body, emptied after

after various Changes, the ſame Portions of Matter, which were once the conſtituent Parts of one human Body, become the conſtituent Parts of another human Body. But the Scripture gives no ſuch Idea of the Reſurrection as theſe Men build upon; but only repreſents our future, heavenly Bodies, as ſpringing from our earthly and corruptible Bodies, in ſome ſuch manner, as a Plant grows from Seed caſt into the Earth; the Poſſibility of which is very eaſy to be conceived. What this *Manner* is, we cannot in either Caſe explain; but the *Fact* we ſee in the one, and may, without Reproach to our Underſtanding, believe it in the other.

Let me then cloſe this Head with theſe two Obſervations. 1. We ſee in how

of all their Contents, you will ſtill have a human Body complete; and who will ſay that this ſolid Body, or (which is all we want) ſuch a Part, or Portion of it, as may ſerve for a *ſeminal Principle*, from whence our future Bodies are to ariſe; may not, by the Power of God, be preſerved from Confuſion with the ſolid Parts, or *ſeminal Principle*, of any other human Body? Men may talk confidently upon this Subject, but they can know nothing.

full

full and complete a Senſe, the Reſurrection will be the Reſtoration of the original State of Man. It is certain, that though, if *Adam* had not ſinned, he would not have *returned to his Duſt*, but enjoyed an endleſs Life without Diſſolution; yet he had from the firſt an earthly Body as we have. The Fruits of the Earth were appointed for his Suſtenance; and he was bid to encreaſe and multiply, as other Creatures were. What wants conſtant Reparation, muſt of Neceſſity be corruptible in its Nature. The Uſe of Food ſuppoſes that Want, and therefore *Adam* was created with a corruptible Body; nor was he in any other Senſe immortal before his Fall, than this, that God had ordained for him the Means of preſerving him for ever; and what was to have been his Lot, was to have been the Lot of all his Poſterity, ſuppoſing them, likewiſe, as continuing in a State of Innocency. But if *Sin* had never *entered into the World*, nor *Death by Sin*, how ſhould the human Race have been preſerved for ever? In this State of Being, think you? By *eating*, *drinking*, *marrying*, *and giving in Marriage?* No, ſurely! For how ſhould this

this earthly Globe, which is but as a Point, when compared to the univerſal Syſtem, have ſuſtained an infinite Multiplication of immortal Beings? If the human Race had increaſed as faſt as it does now, and as it has done ever ſince the Creation (and the Suppoſition of Man's Innocency ſuggeſts nothing that ſhould lead us to imagine otherwiſe: If, I ſay, Mankind had ſo increaſed) and none had died, the Earth would many Ages ſince have been too narrow for its Inhabitants; and therefore the *natural* (and, as I judge, neceſſary) Suppoſition is, that if Man had never ſinned, God would (when he ſaw the proper Time for it) have tranſlated him from this earthly to a heavenly Life; in which caſe, he muſt have ſuffered, in his original State, exactly what the laſt Race of Men ſhall ſuffer, and what the whole Race ſhall attain unto by the Reſurrection from the Dead. His *corruptible* would have *put on Incorruption*, and his *mortal* would have *put on Immortality*.

2. We ſee from hence the Vanity of that Pretence of Unbelievers, that the Goſpel offers us nothing more than what is of-

fered to us by mere Natural Religion. For the utmoſt that mere Natural Religion can pretend to, is a State of Retribution, where good Men ſhall find a Recompence for that unequal Share of Evil which they have ſuffered in this Life. But I have before obſerved, that a State of ſimple Retribution doth not infer a State of Immortality; and, if it did, there may be an infinite Variety in the Degrees of Happineſs in the next World, as there is a very great Variety in the Degrees of it in this. So that unleſs we preciſely knew the Nature of that State to which Man was originally created, and to which the Goſpel propoſes to reſtore us, and could aſcertain the Meaſure of that Happineſs we ſhall there enjoy, and which the Scripture deſcribes to be ſuch as *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of Man*; I ſay, unleſs we knew this (of which we know, particularly, nothing) and withal were qualified to determine how much it is ſtrictly fit for God to do hereafter for good Men, upon the foot of natural Equity (of which we know juſt as much) it muſt be great Folly and Preſumption to aſſure ourſelves, that we ſhall be no

Gainers

Gainers by the Offers of God's Grace in *Chriſt*, when the Difference between what in Mercy we ſhall receive, and what the very beſt of us all can challenge as of Right may, for ought we can tell, hold no kind of Proportion the one to the other.

Of the Sacrifice of Chriſt.

And now let us go one Step farther, and conſider the Groundwork of this merciful Diſpenſation towards us, which the Scripture places (as we have ſeen) in the BLOOD of JESUS CHRIST, offering himſelf as a SACRIFICE, ATONEMENT, or PROPITIATION, for the Sins of the World. Should I ſtate this Doctrine according to the Opinion of ſome modern Chriſtians, I ſhould perhaps find leſs Difficulty with Unbelievers. But I ſhall take it according to what is called the *orthodox* (which I believe to be the true Scripture) Account, *viz.* That the Blood of *Chriſt* is, in the moſt ſtrict and proper Senſe, EFFICACIOUS to the Forgiveneſs of Sin, and our Reconciliation with God. But I muſt put you in mind of what I laid down from the firſt, *viz.* That this Remiſſion of Sin, and Acceptance to God's Favour,

vour, which is purchaſed for us by the Blood of *Chriſt*, "belongs to thoſe and to thoſe "only, who, being obedient to the heavenly "Call, ſhall ſerve God by true Repent-"ance;" which I *repeat*, becauſe it is the conſtant manner of Unbelievers to charge it upon this Doctrine, as if it was intended as a SALVO for Sinners, or, in other Words, that, according to the Chriſtian Scheme, the Sacrifice of *Chriſt* was to ſerve INSTEAD of a right Behaviour: Whereas it is plain, from the whole Scripture Account, that the Sacrifice of *Chriſt* only ſupplies the *Defects* of our Obedience; it does not *diſannul* the Law of God, which no Revelation poſſibly can. We muſt do our beſt, and when we have done ſo, our Obedience, though imperfect, ſhall be accepted; but it is BY, or THROUGH, the Sacrifice of *Jeſus Chriſt*, without which, being all Sinners, our very beſt Services would not have been accepted, to a full, and perfect Reconciliation with God. This is the Scripture Doctrine; and the very Intent of this gracious Diſpenſation was, by the Aſſurance of the Remiſſion of our paſt Sins, to encourage us to Obedience

for the Time to come. *Chriſt gave himſelf for us* (ſays St. *Paul) that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*, Tit. ii. 14. And ſo far is it from Truth and Reaſon, that the Conſideration of *Chriſt's* dying for us, weakens the natural Obligation to well doing, that it binds it the ſtronger and the faſter upon us; God having acquired a peculiar Intereſt in us, by this extraordinary Inſtance of his Love towards us. So the ſame Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* vi. 19. *Ye are* BOUGHT *with a Price*; THEREFORE *glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which* ARE GOD'S. And St. *Peter*, 1 Ep. i. 12. *Gird up the Loins of your Mind, and be ſober*, &c. FORASMUCH *as ye know that ye were not* REDEEMED *with corruptible Things, as Silver and Gold, from your vain Converſation — but with* THE PRECIOUS BLOOD *of Chriſt.* It is in this Light that the Scripture conſiders the Caſe; and in the ſame Light it muſt appear to common Senſe. If a Father, pitying his extravagant Son, pays his Debts, and releaſes him from a Gaol; is it a Reaſon why he ſhould treat him with leſs Obſervance?

ſervance? A wicked and preſumptuous Son might make ſuch Uſe of his Father's Kindneſs in ſuch a Caſe; but no one will pretend to ſay it is a right Behaviour.

Having removed this *Calumny* from the Doctrine under Conſideration, we may now proceed to ſhew the Conſiſtency of it with natural Reaſon; in order to which, theſe three Things are to be premiſed, as plain and evident, *viz.*

1. That this Doctrine does no Injury to *Chriſt*; for what he did, he did *freely* and *willingly*. So St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* ii. 6. *He* GAVE *himſelf a Ranſom.* So alſo *Chriſt* himſelf, *John* vi. 51. *I* GIVE *my Fleſh for the Life of the World.* His Blood, therefore, was his own free Gift, not forced from him by Conſtraint; and that you may not think he gave what he had no Right to beſtow, he tells us, Chap. x. 18. *I lay down my Life* OF MYSELF; *I have* POWER *to lay it down, and I have* POWER *to take it again; this Commandment have I received of my Father.* In *human* Tranſactions, if one Man ſhould of-

fer to lay down his Life, to indemnify another, he would offer more than he has a Right to give: But when the Tranſaction lies between God and Man, HE, being Lord of Life, creates a Right to give, by the Acceptance of what is offered. This was *Chriſt's* Caſe, in offering himſelf as a Ranſom for the World. God approved, God accepted, it; which Acceptance, had he been a common Man, would have ſanctified the Gift; much more when it is conſidered, that as well he who offered, as he who accepted, was Lord of Life, as will be ſhewn in the Sequel of this Argument.

2. This Doctrine cancels no Obligation on the Part of Man, in any Point where natural Duty is concerned. For, as I have ſaid before, the Grace of Pardon is not connected, abſolutely, to the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, but to the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, under the Qualification of Repentance in them that believe. Needs muſt it be ſo! For the Goſpel ſuppoſes us Sinners againſt God, and declares us under Condemnation becauſe we are Sinners. This is conſenting to the natural Obligation of the Law. But had

Chriſt

Chriſt undertaken, by his Death and Sufferings, to looſen the Bands of the Law, it would, in effect, have been denying this Obligation; for what naturally binds, no Authority can poſſibly unlooſe. The Law then ſtands in full Force, though God is merciful, in forgiving the Breaches of it; and the Sacrifice of *Chriſt* neither does nor can do more, than qualify us to be fit Objects of this Mercy.

3. This Doctrine ſuppoſes no transferring of Guilt, or Merit, from one Perſon to another. OUR Sin does not become CHRIST's Sin, by his undertaking the work of our Redemption; nor is his Righteouſneſs in any proper Senſe ſuppoſed to be OUR Righteouſneſs. Each Perſon retains his proper, eſſential Character; HE righteous, and WE Sinners. But the Caſe is, that HE, though righteous, condeſcended to be treated as if he had been a Sinner; and that WE, though Sinners, are treated as if we were righteous. This is the Meaning of thoſe Paſſages in Scripture, where *Chriſt* is ſaid to be MADE *Sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 20. to BEAR *our Sins*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. and we to

be MADE *righteous by him*; the Meaning, I ſay, of theſe, and other ſuch like Paſſages, is no other than this, that *Chriſt*, by his Sufferings, took away the Puniſhment due to our Sins, and that by his Righteouſneſs, in thus fulfilling the Purpoſe of his heavenly Father, our Repentance ſhall avail to Juſtification.

Theſe things premiſed, we may now proceed to the ſingle Point remaining (and upon which the whole Weight of the Difficulty reſts) what Relation of Congruity there is between *Chriſt's* Sufferings, and the Remiſſion of the Sins of Mankind. It is to be underſtood as agreed on both Sides, that it is ſuitable to the Goodneſs of God to forgive Sin; but the Queſtion is, Upon what Terms? We ſay, Upon the Terms of Repentance, conjoined or connected with the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, by, or in conſideration of which, God is pleaſed to accept it: But an Unbeliever may aſk, What Force, what Virtue is there in *Chriſt's* Sacrifice, that Repentance might not as well have been accepted without it?

In order to give an Anſwer to this Queſtion, it will be neceſſary to conſider, what is the proper End of Puniſhment; and whether there is any thing in the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, that bears a material Relation to that End. Now the proper End of Puniſhment, moſt certainly, is not the Affliction, or Miſery of the Tranſgreſſor; but the ſecuring to the Law its Dignity, and Authority. This is ſo true, that, ſhould the Foreſight of the Puniſhment prevent Tranſgreſſions; the Intention of the Law would be anſwered infinitely better, than by Millions of Executions againſt evil Doers. And it is obvious to common Senſe, that in Caſes where the Legiſlator thinks fit to remit the Puniſhment which the Law preſcribes; the Dignity and Authority of the Law will be much better preſerved, if the Legiſlator demands ſomething in the way of COMPENSATION, than if he remits the Puniſhment, upon the ſingle Conſideration of the Offender's Submiſſion. If, in any State, the Legiſlator ſhould make it a conſtant Rule, to remit the Puniſhments due to civil Crimes, upon ſuch eaſy Terms, it

would (in effect) be ſuch a Relaxation of the Law, that no Government could long ſtand under ſuch an Adminiſtration. Therefore, in well ordered Commonwealths, Puniſhment, ordinarily, follows the Offence, and Pardons are reſtrained to particular Caſes; and in thoſe Caſes, I conceive, the Reaſon upon which the Pardon is grounded, is not the mere Submiſſion of the Offender; but it is (or ought to be) ſome concurrent Circumſtance, which makes the abating the Rigour of the Law, in thoſe Inſtances, expedient for the public Good, which is the ſupreme Rule for all civil Adminiſtrations.

The granting Pardons to Delinquents is, in moſt Commonwealths perhaps, an Act of free Grace; but it is not neceſſary that it ſhould be ſo. If a Man has forfeited his Life to the Law, the Magiſtrate (for any thing that there is in the general Nature of the Thing to hinder) may very juſtly demand of him, to [1] redeem it by a Sum of

[1] The Law of *Moſes* allowed this in one Caſe. See *Exod.* xxi. 30.

Money;

Money; and in that caſe it would be the ſame thing, whether the Offender pays it himſelf or ſome other Perſon pays it for him. For the Money being paid *(ratione Delicti)* on the Score of the Offence, the Law has its Compenſation. To come nearer to the Caſe yet: What if, inſtead of demanding a Ranſom by Money, the Magiſtrate ſhould declare, that he would not remit the Offence, unleſs ſome body elſe would voluntarily conſent to ſuffer the Law in his ſtead? Though this would be requiring a Condition (ordinarily) impracticable, and which in juſtice could not be complied with, becauſe a Man has not a Right over his own Life, as he has over his Money; yet, ſuppoſing that a Man had ſuch a Right, and that the Condition were accepted and performed, this being done, on the Behalf of the Offender, *ratione Delicti*, the Law again would have its Compenſation; and in both theſe Caſes, it is clear, that *more* is done to ſecure the Dignity and Authority of the Law, than would have been done, if the Magiſtrate had granted a free, unconditional Pardon.

This

This ſhews then, that, in order to create a Relation between the Puniſhment and its proper End, it is not neceſſary that it ſhould be inflicted PERSONALLY upon the Offender; but that the inflicting it upon his SUBSTITUTE, will anſwer to the ſame Effect, where the Legiſlator ſees wiſe and weighty Reaſons ſo to inflict it. The End of Puniſhment (as I ſaid before) is to preſerve the Law from Contempt; and ſo far is it from Truth, that it can have no Force or Virtue in order to this End, unleſs the Puniſhment falls upon the Offender; that it may have its Uſe, even when *(morally* ſpeaking) no Offence at all has been committed. A Brute Creature is not *(morally)* capable of an Offence; and yet, when God had ſanctified Mount *Sinai* for the Place of his more immediate Abode, he gave this Law to *Moſes: Thou ſhalt ſet Bounds to the People round about it, ſaying, Take heed unto yourſelves that ye go not up into the Mount, or touch the Border of it; whoſoever toucheth the Mount ſhall ſurely be put to Death—whether it be* BEAST *or Man, it ſhall not live,* Exod. xix. 12, 13.

Another Law, not unlike to this, we have Chap. xxi. ver. 28, *If an Ox gore a Man or a Woman that they die, the Ox ſhall be ſurely ſtoned.* And by our own Laws, if a Man is ſlain by Misfortune, the very *Inſtrument* (whatever it be) that cauſed his Death, is forfeited. Theſe Inſtances ſhew, that the Uſe of Puniſhment hath no neceſſary Relation to any antecedent moral Behaviour; and therefore not (preciſely) to the antecedent moral Behaviour of the Perſon that ſuffers it, ſuppoſing him to be a moral Agent. If you except againſt theſe Laws, the Reſolution is plain and eaſy. The Mount was ſacred by the more immediate Preſence of God; and the Life of a Man is ſacred, as being made *after the Image of God*; of which theſe Examples were intended as publick Notices, thereby to preſerve to ſacred Things their due Reverence. And if the Reverence that is due to God's Perſon and Laws, may properly be guarded by demanding a Compenſation, in the Life of a Brute, or upon the Property of a Man innocent, and even ignorant of the Fact, for which the Compenſation is made; I deſire to know a Reaſon why it may not, with the ſame Propriety, be

be guarded, by demanding and accepting the ſame in the Perſon of a SUBSTITUTE? A Subſtitute cannot be leſs concerned in an Offence than a Beaſt, or a Machine, or the innocent Owner of them is; and if a mere accidental Miſchief, in which there is (morally) nothing either good or evil, owes ſomething to the Law by way of Compenſation; how much more a wilful, deliberate Tranſgreſſion?

It is upon this Foundation that we are to place that general Law of God, given by *Moſes* to the *Jews*, in which he declared, that he would *viſit the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children*. With the Juſtice of this Law I have, at preſent, nothing to do; but the Uſe of it, no doubt, lay in this, that it was a conſtant ſtanding Admonition to the *Jews*, how jealous God was of the Honour of his Laws, the Tranſgreſſion whereof would be attended with Miſchief, not only to the Guilty, but to their Children of many Generations, and even to whole Kingdoms and Nations. *Canaan* was laid under a Curſe for the Sin of *Ham*, Gen. ix. 25. The *People* of *Iſrael* periſhed for the Sin of *David*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 15—17. *Achan*

Achan and his Sons were puniſhed together for the Father's Wickedneſs, *Joſhua* vii. 24. *Ahab's* Sin was remitted as to *himſelf*, upon his Humiliation, and the Puniſhment laid upon his Son, 1 *Kings* xxi. 29. And we have another remarkable Inſtance in *David* (in the Matter of *Bathſheba)* upon whoſe Humiliation and Repentance the Prophet ſaid, *The Lord hath put away thy Sin; thou ſhalt not die; howbeit, becauſe by this Deed thou haſt given great Occaſion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme, the Child that is born unto thee ſhall ſurely die*, 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14. The Latin Verſion renders it (more cloſely to the Original) *Dominus* TRANSTULIT *peccatum tuum*, the Lord hath *transferred* thy Sin (*i. e.* the Puniſhment of it) from thee to thy Son; and the Reaſon expreſly aſſigned for it is, leſt, if God ſhould remit the Sin without this Compenſation, he might ſeem to ſet the Authority of his Laws at too low a Price. I do not expect that Unbelievers ſhould ſubſcribe to the Reaſonableneſs of theſe Proceedings, upon the Authority of the Old Teſtament, conſidered as a divine Revelation.

tion. I recite the Facts only as the Hiſtory records them, leaving the Reaſon of the Caſe to reſt upon the Conſiderations already laid before you. And yet there is this Weight in theſe Inſtances; that they are full Evidence that, in the Senſe of a wiſe Legiſlator, and a great Nation, the Notion of VICARIOUS PUNISHMENTS, is not ſo abſurd a Thing as ſome Men are deſirous to repreſent it. But why do I ſpeak of the *Jews?* All Nations were full of it. There is a famous Inſtance recorded by ſeveral ancient Hiſtorians, and cited by *Grotius*, in *Zaleucus*, who, when his Son ſtood convicted of Adultery, and by a Law of his own making ought to have been deprived of both his Eyes; refuſed the Requeſt of the *Locrians*, who were deſirous that the Puniſhment ſhould be remitted, and having put out one of his own Eyes, ordered that his Son ſhould loſe one of his. The learned Author joins in thoſe high Commendations which all Antiquity give of this Act of *Zaleucus*, with this judicious Exception, *viz.* That *Zaleucus* was miſtaken, in common with the reſt of the Heathens, in ſuppoſing that he had any ſuch

ſuch Right over his own Body. But at the ſame time he obſerves (and very juſtly) that this Inſtance fully proves, that in the Senſe of Antiquity, there was no Impropriety, that one Man ſhould, in certain Caſes, bear the Puniſhment due to another's Offence. Thoſe who would ſee more Examples from Antiquity, to the ſame Purpoſe, may conſult the [m] ſame Author: But that which above all Things ſhews the Univerſality of this Notion, is, the univerſal Uſe of EXPIATORY SACRIFICES, in which the Lives of Beaſts (and ſometimes human Creatures) were offered up to the Gods by way of Compenſation for Sin. And though this Practice was blended with great Superſtition and Impiety, yet it carried with it a tacit Confeſſion, and Intimation to Mankind, that Sin was odious and offenſive to the Deity, and that ſomething, beſides the Humiliation of the Sinner, was neceſſary to obtain Remiſſion.

The Application of this Reaſoning to the Matter before us, is ſo plain and obvious, that it needs only to be very briefly men-

[m] *De Satisfact. Chriſti*, Cap. iv.

tioned

tioned to you. All Mankind ſtood as Sinners before God, and as ſuch obnoxious to Death. God in Mercy was pleaſed that the Puniſhment ſhould be remitted; but, to preſerve the Honour due to his Laws and Government, demands it as a previous Condition, that *Jeſus Chriſt*, to be made manifeſt in due Time, ſhould be offered up as a Sacrifice. Where is the Abſurdity of this? Was it not fit that God ſhould ſhew Mercy in ſuch a Way, as to give full Proof to his Creatures, that he would abate nothing of the Reverence due to his ſovereign Authority? Is not the Compenſation required, that Proof? Or would this Point have ſtood in the ſame Light if no Compenſation at all had been required? You may ſay, if you pleaſe, that a Compenſation was not neceſſary in this Caſe, and it ſhall be admitted when you can prove it. But to ſay that there is no *Force*, no *Virtue*, in requiring a Compenſation, to ſhew the *Rate* that a Legiſlator ſets upon his Authority, is againſt common Senſe. I admit, that in Caſes of this Nature there ought to be ſome viſible Proportion between the Offence and the Compenſation required. If a Man

a Man ſhould be guilty of Treaſon, and the Magiſtrate ſhould ſet a trifling Sum upon his Head, he would expoſe his Authority to Contempt; upon which Principle, I conceive, it is, that the Apoſtle ſays, *It is not poſſible that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats ſhould take away Sins*, Heb. x. 4. There is not that Dignity in ſuch Sacrifices, as to make them a fit Compenſation for the Sins of Men. Such Sacrifices were indeed accepted under the Law; but to what *Effect?* Not to the *purging of the Conſcience*, but *to the purifying of the Fleſh.* This partial, temporary Remiſſion was but the Shadow of that full and perfect Remiſſion, which the Goſpel holds forth to us; and for the Shadow of a Remiſſion, the Shadow of a Compenſation might well ſerve; for ſuch, and no more, was the *Blood of Bulls and of Goats.* But as the ſame Apoſtle obſerves, Chap. ix. ver. 23. If *the Patterns of Things in the Heavens were purged with theſe* Sacrifices, *it was neceſſary that the heavenly Things* THEMSELVES ſhould be purged *with* BETTER *Sacrifices than theſe.* SUCH was the Sacrifice of CHRIST, which ALONE

is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all *that come unto God by him*, Chap. vii. 25.

But how ſo? may ſome one aſk. If one Man only had ſinned, the Life of another Man might have been admitted as a full Compenſation. But what Proportion is there between the Life of one Man and the Sins of the whole human Race? The Queſtion is pertinent, and the Anſwer is ſhort; *Chriſt* was not a mere Man, but the SON OF GOD MADE MAN. It is under this Character, that this Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* (the principal Subject of which is his Prieſtly Dignity) introduces him with great Solemnity, Chap. i. ver. 1,2, 3. *God, who at ſundry Times, and in divers Manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt Days ſpoken unto us by* HIS SON, *whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things, by whom alſo he made the Worlds. Who being the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power, when he had* BY HIMSELF PURGED OUR SINS, *ſat down on the Right Hand of the Majeſty on high.* This is he

of

of whom St. *John* writes, in the firſt Chapter of his Goſpel, ver. 1. *In the Beginning was* THE WORD, *and* THE WORD *was with God, and the Word* WAS GOD—*all Things were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made* —*And* THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH *and dwelt among us.* And hath not *Chriſt*, though born of a Woman, and in that Senſe the Son of Man, often called himſelf THE SON OF GOD? Hath he not ſaid of himſelf, *Before Abraham was, I am?* John viii. 58. *I and my Father are one?* Chap. x. 30. *I am in the Father and the Father in me?* Chap. xiv. 11. *I came down from Heaven to do the Will of him that ſent me?* Chap. vi. 38. *The Son of Man came down from Heaven* and *is in Heaven?* Chap. iii. 13. It is upon theſe Characters (which, in reſpect of that Nature which he had from the Beginning, beſpeak him to be nothing leſs than the VERY ESSENTIAL GOD) that the Scripture places the Value of *Chriſt's* Sacrifice. As to what Unbelievers may object to the Doctrine of *Chriſt's* Divinity, I ſhall in due time conſider it, ſo far as I am at preſent concerned

in it. But, the Doctrine admitted, nobody can ſay that, ſuppoſing God was determined to accept of a Compenſation for the Sins of Mankind, the Sacrifice of *Chriſt* was not a Compenſation proportionable; for it has in it all the Value, all the Dignity, that any Compenſation can have. And ſurely it muſt be an illuſtrious Example to Mankind (which no thinking Perſon can overlook) how great was that Love by which we are redeemed, at ſo high a Price; how great that Wrath againſt Sin, which was not to be put away without ſo rich a Sacrifice. So the Scripture teaches us to reaſon. *In this was manifeſted the Love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him*, 1 John iv. 9. And our Saviour; *God* so *loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son*, John iii. 16. This is ſpeaking after the Manner of Men. If a Father gives up the Life of his Son to the Good of his Country, it is a great Inſtance of Love, becauſe Love is hereby ſeen to prevail againſt fatherly Affection: And though God the Father, being void of all Paſſion, hath not what

we

we call *the Bowels* of a Father, and could not therefore feel that Reluctance, and Uneaſineſs, which earthly Parents feel on ſuch Occaſions, yet, ſince *Chriſt* was a Perſon in Rank and Dignity immediately next to himſelf, it yields exactly the ſame Conſtruction. The Condeſcenſion was infinitely great, and therefore the Love proportionable. *He made himſelf of* NO REPUTATION, ſays the Apoſtle, *and being found in the Faſhion of a Man, he* HUMBLED *himſelf*, Phil. ii. 7, 8. In this lies the Streſs of the Argument; and an Argument it is of the greateſt Force, to beget in our Minds the moſt full and perfect Reliance upon the divine Goodneſs, whilſt our Behaviour is ſuch as qualifies us for it; as on the other hand, to convince us what we are to expect if we deſpiſe the Riches of his Grace, and when he hath ſaved us, we will not be ſaved. For *he that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all Things?* Rom. viii. 32. And the Argument will be as cogent if you put it the other Way, thus, *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, how

ſhall he ſpare Us, if we neglect ſo great Salvation? *Heb.* ii. 3.

Whether God could not have ſaved Mankind in any other Way than this; or whether the Account I have given of this Diſpenſation, comes fully up to the Views and Intentions of his Providence; what Mortal ſhall pretend to ſay! What I would prove (and what, I truſt, I have proved) is, that there is a plain and viſible Relation in Reaſon and common Senſe, between *Chriſt's* bearing the Puniſhment of our Sins, as our VICAR and SUBSTITUTE, and the End of Puniſhment, when it is conſidered as inflicted upon the Tranſgreſſors themſelves; as it does *Honour* to the Majeſty and Authority of God, and ſets before Us (whom he *therefore* ſaved from Death, that he might alſo reſcue us from Sin and Corruption) as in a lively Picture (of far more Force than naked Precept) the ſtrongeſt Teſtimony that can be given, both of his Goodneſs and his Severity; the one, to encourage us to hope well, the other to keep us from Preſumption. But we are to remember that the ſame Goſpel, which

which declares this Method of Salvation, declares it alſo to be a MYSTERY; and there is in it ſomething ſo great, ſo awful, ſo far exceeding every thing that we know of human Things, that one would moſt naturally ſuppoſe, that there are Reaſons that lie hid in the Boſom of Providence, then to be made manifeſt, when the whole Scene of Things, as they reſpect God's univerſal Government, comes to be laid open, and the ſeveral Parts of it compared together. St. *Paul* tells us, that NOW *we know in* PART, and *ſee through a Glaſs* DARKLY, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And what is there in this Confeſſion, that can give juſt Cauſe of Offence? What if you cannot ſearch to the Bottom of this Myſtery, will you therefore reject it as incredible? By what Rule of Proceeding in other Caſes can this be juſtified? We muſt all confeſs (and by almoſt every Action of our Lives, every Day do confeſs) that human Wiſdom hath its certain Limits beyond which it cannot go. And how ſtrange a Thing is it, that, when we ſee Wonders in almoſt every Part of the Creation, we ſhould find it hard to believe,

that there may be ſomething in the Work of our Redemption too, that is of too high a Nature for human Minds to comprehend! There is certainly as much Senſe in turning Atheiſt, becauſe we cannot account for the Works of the Creation, as there is in rejecting the Goſpel, becauſe we cannot underſtand the whole Work of our Redemption; and it is to be apprehended, that the ſame perverſe Turn of Mind that leads to the one, prepares the Way for the other.—Here then my Province ends, and it will be fit that I cloſe up this Argument.

We have now carried our Enquiries from the firſt State of Man in Paradiſe, to the laſt Act of our Saviour's Life. We have ſhewn the Loſs of Immortality by Sin, and its Reſtoration by the Reſurrection from the Dead, through the Propitiation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who was made a Sacrifice for Sin, and hath purchaſed eternal Redemption for us. The Redemption (as we have ſaid) belongs to thoſe, "who, "being obedient to the heavenly Call, ſhall "return back to the Law from whence "they

" they have ſwerved, and ſerve God by true " Repentance." But they that ſhall reject the Goſpel are yet *under the Curſe*; and *ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting Deſtruction, from the Preſence of the Lord, when he ſhall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Theſſ. i. 8, 9.

This EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT decreed againſt the Diſobedient and Refractory, is what we properly term the SANCTION of the Law of *Chriſt*; the Severity of which gives great Offence to Unbelievers; upon what reaſonable Grounds we are in due Time to conſider. But previouſly to what is to be offered upon this Head, it muſt be enquired, whether the Law be in itſelf juſt; and whether we are furniſhed with proper Encouragements, and ſuitable Aſſiſtances, to qualify us to fulfil it. For if in all, or in any of theſe reſpects, the Goſpel ſhould be found defective, the Severity of the Sanction cannot ſtand with Reaſon and Equity.

Let

Of the Equity of the Law of Christ, as to the Matter *of it.*

Let us begin then with the *Law*; which is well set forth in those few, but comprehensive Words of the Apostle, *Tit.* ii. 11, 12. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.* This is the great Burden that Unbelievers complain of: This, the *Rock of Offence*, upon which many stumble and fall. I do not pretend to decide upon particular Cases; but I think I shall not pass an uncharitable Judgment, if I say, that there would be much less Fault found with the Gospel Evidence, if many had not an irreconcileable Aversion to its practical Rules and Precepts. If *Christ* had offered a Religion to the World that should have left full Scope and Liberty to sensual Appetite; though, to wise and considerate Men, such an Indulgence would have been an Objection against it not to be got over; yet, with those who are well enough contented that there should be Religion, but are not willing

ling it ſhould coſt them much (which, I am afraid, are the greater Part of Mankind) the Goſpel would have found Admittance upon very eaſy Terms. But to talk to Men of a ſenſual Turn of Mind, of reſtraining Appetite, and contradicting Fleſh and Blood, this is like *pulling out a right Eye, or cutting off a right Hand.* Such as theſe will diſpute every Inch; and, as it is natural for them, under this kind of Byaſs, to require more Evidence than the Goſpel has (or it is fit it ſhould have) to give; no wonder that, in proportion as their Virtues leave them, their Faith alſo fails them. If a Man has Virtue, his Faith would be the greateſt of Comforts to him. But Faith, and a Conſcience that ſtands condemned by a Law admitted by one's ſelf, are troubleſome Companions, and cannot long hold together.

Let us try, then, to eaſe the Goſpel of this Prejudice, ſo fatal to Millions, and yet of ſo little Weight, if Men will attend to Reaſon. My general Obſervation is, that whatever there may be in this Difficulty, it can with no ſort of Juſtice be charged upon

upon Christianity specially: For the Gospel does not make the Difficulty, but finds it. If *Jesus* had never preached, or been preached to Mankind, they would have had Appetites, and a Law within themselves to restrain those Appetites; as St. *Paul* speaks, *Rom.* ii. 14. *For when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law; these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves*, &c. Right and Wrong are not of arbitrary Appointment, but founded in the Nature and Constitution of Men and Things. Now if there is naturally a Law declaring Right, there must, of course, be a Law declaring a Restraint of Appetite within the Limits of that Right. And what more does the Gospel say? We are bidden to *abstain from fleshly Lusts*—to *mortify our Members*—to *crucify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts*, and the like. What does all this mean? That Appetite is never to be gratified? No surely! For God hath made nothing in vain. If he hath given us Appetite, there must be some Use of Appetite, and therefore, some proper Way of gratifying Appetite. All, then, that the Gospel

can

can mean, is, that we ſhould deny Appetite when it would carry us beyond our natural Limits; which is referring us to the natural Law, as our proper Rule in ſuch Caſes. The Goſpel enjoins moral Duties; it no where defines them. It commands us to be ſober, juſt, and temperate; it does not explain what Sobriety, Juſtice, and Temperance are, but *refers* to them, as things well known and underſtood by the Light of every Man's Mind. A very evident Proof, that, in this reſpect, the natural Law, and the Law of the Goſpel are one and the ſame.

It was neceſſary to take notice of this, that Men may ſee what is the true Conſtruction of this Prejudice; and to what Lengths it will carry them, if purſued to its utmoſt Conſequences. It will not ſerve them to lay aſide the Goſpel. They muſt give up with it Natural Religion too; which, perhaps, is what many do not well conſider at firſt ſetting out. Their Leaders tell them, that, when they are once rid of the Goſpel, they have nothing elſe to do but to *follow Nature*. This, they ſay, is

Natural

Natural Religion ; and they would ſay well if they meant honeſtly. But what is *following Nature?* Do you mean being governed by Appetite? If you do not; what do you gain by laying aſide the Goſpel? If you do; how comes being governed by Appetite, to be the ſame thing with following Nature? Is nothing natural to Man but Appetite? Is not Reaſon juſt as natural? If this is the Caſe; to follow Appetite againſt Reaſon, is not following Nature, but acting againſt Nature; for to direct is the natural *Uſe* of Reaſon. It is not ſo when Reaſon controuls Appetite; becauſe, to be indulged without Limits is not the natural Uſe of Appetite. Appetite was given to excite and move to ſuch Actions as are ſuitable to our natural Wants; as Hunger to excite us to eat; Thirſt to excite us to drink; both which are neceſſary to the Support of the animal Life. But theſe Things have their Limits aſſigned them by Nature, beyond which if we go, the verv End of them is perverted; and what ſhould reſtrain us within theſe Limits, but Reaſon? This ſhews, that to reſtrain Appetite within the Bounds that Reaſon

Reaſon preſcribes to it, is the true, natural State of a Man, as diſtinguiſhed from a Brute; and in this muſt Natural Religion conſiſt, if you are in earneſt that there is any ſuch thing. Now, this Principle admitted, the Bounds of Appetite will lie juſt where the Goſpel has placed them, whether you receive it, or whether you receive it not. For the Goſpel forbids no Indulgence of Appetite which Reaſon allows, but is (as I have before ſaid) thus far, and in this reſpect, the very Law of Nature itſelf.

This ſhews then the Miſtake of thoſe, who fancy, that, in reſpect of ſenſual Indulgence, Chriſtianity is a [n] ſeverer Law than the Law of Nature. But the more effectually to confute this Prejudice, let us enter a little more diſtinctly into the particular

[n] *Trypho* the *Jew* pretended, that the Law of *Chriſt* is ſuch high-ſtrained Morality as to be impracticable; Τμῶν δὲ οὐ τὰ ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ Εὐαγγελίῳ παραγγέλματα θαυμαστὰ ἔτως οὐ μεγάλα ἐπίσαμαι εἶναι ὡς ὑπολαμβάνειν μηδένα δυνάσθαι φυλάξαι αὐτά. Vid. *Juſtin. Mart.* cum *Tryph.* dialogus, p. 32. Ed. *Febb.*

Heads

Heads of the Chriſtian Doctrine in this reſpect. Theſe are (chiefly) collected together by our Saviour himſelf, in his Sermon on the Mount, which we find recorded in the fifth, ſixth, and ſeventh Chapters of St. *Matthew's* Goſpel; and from thence I ſhall ſelect ſuch Points as ſeem moſt liable to Exception.

The firſt concerns the Intercourſe between the Sexes; upon which it is pretended, that the Law of *Chriſt* is a heavy and unreaſonable Reſtraint. But upon what Reaſons is this Complaint grounded? *Chriſt* has not forbidden Marriage, though ſome of his Followers have; and his Apoſtle recommends it as *honourable among all Men.* But the Fault may be, that the Goſpel inſiſts upon Marriage as previous to this Commerce; and will not ſuffer Men and Women to range together like Herds of Cattle. But is it not moſt evident to common Senſe, that the very Difference between the natural State of Men and other living Creatures, points out a different Way of acting in this Caſe? The Beaſts are left to propagate their Kind as it may happen. For why?

why? God feedeth and cloatheth the Cattle by an Act of his Providence, without any Labour or Forecaſt of their own; and what do the young ones want, but the Milk of the Dam for a little Space, which Nature herſelf ſtretches forth to them with a liberal Hand? Man is born a Creature quite helpleſs; and Years muſt paſs, before he will be able to provide himſelf with the common Neceſſaries of Life. And as he is inſufficient for his own natural Wants, ſo he is alſo for his own Inſtruction in that kind of Behaviour, which is proper to him as a reaſonable Creature, ſent into this World, not to live and die like a Brute, but to be the Servant of God, and an uſeful Member of human Society. From this Circumſtance in the Condition of Man (peculiar to himſelf) originally flows the Duty of Parents towards their Children; who, by the common Law of Nature, are bound to do that for them which they are not able to do for themſelves. And this Care, whether it concerns the Wants of the Body, or (which is a Matter not of the loweſt Conſideration) the Improvements of the Mind, is alike incumbent upon both Pa-

rents; becauſe they have both the ſame natural Relation to their Children.

From hence then ariſeth this Precept of Nature, reſtraining this kind of Commerce, *viz.* That it ſhould never be carried on in ſuch a Way as hinders Procreation, and miniſters merely to carnal Appetite; or introduces an Uncertainty of Property in the Offspring; or which ſuppoſes an Inattention to that Care, which Nature hath laid upon Parents towards their Children. And farther; as every Perſon that is born into the World, has a natural Right to the Means of Preſervation, from the Parents firſt, or, if they fail, from the Society in which they are born; this gives to Society ſo far an Intereſt in this Caſe, as to have a Right to know between whom this Commerce is intended to be carried on, and to have ſuch Intention previouſly declared by ſome publick Form; that, in caſe Parents ſhould be negligent in the Care of their Children, the Community (which ſtands next in charge) may underſtand to whom to have Recourſe for Redreſs; that the innocent and helpleſs may not be left to periſh,

periſh, or the Burden of them be caſt upon thoſe who have no Obligation to maintain them. And when ſuch Forms are ſettled by publick Authority, to carry on this Commerce in Contempt of it, is an Act of Defiance to Society, and conſequently an Offence to God, the Author of Society.

From theſe Principles of natural Right, which are plain and eaſy, I ſhould hope the Queſtion may be ſo far determined, as that Concubinage out of the Bounds of lawful Wedlock, will be thought to have no Pretence to plead Privilege by the Law of Nature; the ill Effects of which to Society are ſo ſenſibly felt, that all Societies think themſelves concerned to guard againſt it. Even in [o] Heathen Nations it paſſed not

[o] Περὶ ἀφροδίσια εἰς δωάμιν, πρὸ γάμυ καθαρευτέον· ἀπλομένῳ δὲ, ὡς νόμιμόν ἐϛι μηταλητέον, ſays *Epictetus*, *Enchir.* xlvii. This is a Diſcouragement of Fornication, not an abſolute Prohibition; and it is certain (and this Paſſage ſhews) that the Civil Laws of the ancient Heathen States tolerated it under certain Regulations; not becauſe it was conſidered as void of all moral Turpitude (for, had this been the Caſe, there would have been no room for the Advice

without Reproach; and in how ill Repute it was in the moſt ancient Times, we may learn from the Hiſtory of *Judah*, recorded *Gen.* xxxviii. who, when he had defiled his Daughter in Law, whom he took for a Harlot, behaved as one who ſtood condemned by his own Conſcience; and

that follows, μὴ μέντοι, ἐπαχθὴς γένῃ τοῖς χρωμένοις μηδὲ ἐλεγκτικὸς, &c. but) becauſe it was thought proper to manage what could not thoroughly be cured: Upon which Principle, publick Stews are to'erated in ſome Chriſtian Countries at this Day. If a Woman loſt her Character in this reſpect, it was the Ruine of her Fortunes.

Quod ſecunda ei dos erat
Periit. Pro virgine dari nuptum non poteſt.
Ter. Adelph. Act. iii. Scen. 2.

And therefore, to debauch the Daughter of a Freeman was looked upon as a very high Offence.

An paulum hoc eſſe tibi videtur, virginem
Vitiare civem?
Eun. Act. v. Sc. 2. See alſo Adelph. Act. iii. Sc. 5.

But foreign Women were allowed to keep Houſes of publick Reſort: And yet, to frequent ſuch Places was looked upon as a Fault, which (like diſorderly Behaviour of other kinds) might be excuſed in young Men; not as a thing to be juſtified.

Non eſt flagitium—Adoleſcentulum
Scortari, neque potare; non eſt neque fores
Effringere. Adelph. Act. i. Scen. 2.

would

would (if the thing ſhould be known) be condemned by the common Voice of Mankind. He had left in her Hand a Pledge for her Reward; and when he ſent to redeem it, and the Woman was not found;

But if Whoredom was not reckoned among the *Flagitia*, the *heinous* Offences, it was an Offence, and is here treated as ſuch; for who will ſay that Riot and Drunkenneſs (which are here likewiſe excuſed) are not Breaches of the natural Law; or were not then ſo eſteemed? The Commonneſs of this Vice made it leſs minded, as it does now; but ſtill it was a Diſgrace, and no body, but the moſt abandoned, cared to be ſeen in it.

An ea quoque dicetur hujus, ſi una hæc dedecori eſt parum! Heauton. Act. ii. Scen. 2.

Amavit; at id clam. Cavit ne unquam Infamiæ Ea res ſibi eſſet. Andr. Act ii. Scen. 6.

And ſo ſtrong was the Senſe of the natural Turpitude of this Practice, that even their wicked Theology could not efface it. When the young Rake was boaſting to his Companion of an amorous Adventure, and ſaying, that he found in his Miſtreſs's Chamber the Picture of *Jupiter* coming down to *Danae* in a golden Shower; he makes this Remark,

Ego Homuncio hoc non facerem? Ego vero illud feci. Eun. Act. iii. Scen. 5.

But Men never quote great Examples to juſtify themſelves, unleſs they are conſcious that the public Voice is againſt them.

he forbids all farther Enquiry after her, ſaying, *Let her take it to her, leſt we be* ASHAMED, ver. 23. And in the Caſe of *Dinah*, whom *Hamor* defiled, the Sons of *Jacob* give this Reaſon for the deſperate Revenge they took; *Should he deal with our Siſter as with an* HARLOT? *Gen.* xxxiv. 31. The common Interpretation here is, that *Hamor* [p] offered Violence to *Dinah*; and the learned *Selden* [q], and others after him, have obſerved, that unleſs this had been the Caſe, there would have been no juſt Ground for the Quarrel; becauſe (as the *Jewiſh* Doctors teach) before the Law of *Moſes*, the Right of Nations was not violated by a Man's having Commerce with a ſingle Woman, provided it were by her free Conſent, and no civil Law intervened. But this ill agrees with the Speech of *Jacob's* Sons: For to compel a

[p] But the Words in the Original imply nothing of *Violence*. The Verb which is rendered *he took*, is often applied to marrying lawful Wives. And the other Verb, which is tranſlated *defiled*, is only a modeſt Word for having had carnal Knowledge of a Woman.

[q] *De Jur. Nat.* Lib. vii. cap. 5.

Woman

Woman by Force is not *dealing with her as with an Harlot*, but uſing her a great deal worſe; and, as the Reſentment of theſe two Brothers did not diſpoſe them to palliate the Offence, it is probable, that, if this had been the Caſe, they would have ſpoke of it in ſtronger Terms. This, however, ſhews, that a Harlot in thoſe Times was an infamous Character; and ſo the Rabbies in effect confeſs, when they ſay, that though *Dinah* did not conſent, and therefore was no Harlot, "yet, in conſe-"quence of this Tranſaction, ſhe would have "paſſed as ſuch among the *Hivites*," and that this was the Reaſon of the Anger and Revenge of her two Brothers: This Anſwer, I ſay, admits, that in thoſe Times an Harlot was an infamous Character, as the other Caſe ſhews, that having Concern with a Harlot was infamous: For *Maimonides* deſerves no Regard, who pretends, that when *Judah* ſaid, *Let her take it to her, leſt we be* ASHAMED, no more is meant than that, "in Matters of this kind, even "though they are lawful, we ought not "to ſpeak but with *Modeſty*:" For if what he lays down be true, that in thoſe Days

" Commerce with a Whore was as Com-
" merce with a Man's Wife; and the
" Wages of an Harlot, as the Portion which
" was given to a Wife when ſhe was put
" away by Divorce:" If, I ſay, this ſcandalous Aſſertion was true, there could ſurely have been no Breach of Modeſty, if *Judah*, when the Woman (whom he knew not then to have been his Daughter in Law) was not found, had made further Enquiry after her, to take back the Pledge which he had left in her Hand, and to pay her the Price ſhe had contracted for. Both Inſtances then come fully up to our Purpoſe; the one ſhewing, that *Jacob* thought he had diſgraced himſelf by having Commerce with an Harlot; and the other, that the Sons of *Jacob* looked upon *Hamor*, in that Intercourſe with their Siſter, whilſt they were yet unmarried, as having brought a Diſgrace upon their Family. If you ſay, that this was not from any natural Turpitude that there was in this Sort of Commerce, but becauſe it was an Offence againſt the civil Laws of thoſe Countries; it will nothing help you; becauſe it ought to be preſumed, that ſuch Laws were not

mere

mere arbitrary Conſtitutions, as about Things in their own Nature indifferent, but founded upon Conviction, that ſuch Liberties with unmarried Women were Violations of the original Law of Nature. Let *Maimonides* himſelf be heard upon this Point; who, ſpeaking of the Reaſon why this Liberty was reſtrained by the Law of *Moſes*, ſays it was, "becauſe by Whore-"dom Families are confounded and de-"ſtroyed, and their Iſſues are by all Men "treated as Aliens—than which nothing "can be worſe for them and for their Pa-"rents." That "for preventing the many "Brawls and Quarrels, Fightings and "Bloodſhed" to which Whoredom leads the Way, "and that the Diſtinction of "Families might be preſerved, both "Whores and Whoremongers are con-"demned; and no other Conjunction per-"mitted, but with a Man's own Wife pub-"lickly married[r]." Theſe are Reaſons which eternally hold, and which ſuit all Nations and People, as well as the *Jews*; which it is ſtrange that this Rabbi ſhould

[r] See *Patr.* on *Deut.* xxiii. 17. and *Selden*, *De Jur. Nat.* Lib. v. Cap. 4.

not

not have ſeen, or, if he did ſee it, it is as ſtrange that he ſhould have given ſo looſe an Account of the Morals of the ancient Times, in this Particular.

It is however admitted, that among the *Jews* all Commerce, but with a Man's own lawful Wife, was forbidden. And the Law indeed is very expreſs as it ſtands *Deut.* xxiii. 17. *There ſhall be* NO WHORE *of the Daughters of Iſrael, nor a* SODOMITE [or, as the Word may be tranſlated, WHOREMONGER] *of the Sons of Iſrael.* And again, *Levit.* xix. 29. *Do not proſtitute thy Daughter to cauſe her to be a Whore, leſt the Land fall to Whoredom, and the Land become full of Wickedneſs.* Agreeably to which; the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he would repreſent a very wicked and corrupted State of the *Jewiſh* Nation, gives it as one Part of his Deſcription, that *they aſſembled themſelves by Troops in the Harlots Houſes*, Jer. v. 7. I ſo much the rather take notice of this, becauſe it is cuſtomary with Unbelievers, on this Head, to ſet the Law of God at Variance with itſelf; the Old Teſtament againſt the New. But, however

they

they may differ as to ſome Points, by and by to be mentioned, it is certain that this vague, promiſcuous Commerce, of which we are now ſpeaking, and by which nothing is meant but the gratifying a preſent, brutal Appetite, is as directly condemned by the Law of *Moſes*, as it is by the Law of *Chriſt*. *Solomon*, no doubt, wrote according to the Maxims of the Diſpenſation he was under; and where do you find ſtronger Warnings againſt this Vice than in his Book of *Proverbs*? The Paſſages are too well known to need repeating,—But what then? you will ſay. Do we not, as well before as under the Law, read of Men's having *Concubines* as well as *Wives*? Had not *Abraham*, *Jacob*, *David*, *Solomon*, and others, their *Concubines*? And is this Practice any where reprehended as criminal? Very true. But theſe *Concubines* were not *Harlots*, but *Wives*; and ſo they are frequently called in Scripture. So *Keturah*, who is reckoned among *Abraham's* Concubines, *Gen.* xxv. 6. (and is called ſo, 1 *Chron.* i. 32.) is at the firſt Verſe of the ſame Chapter ſtyled his *Wife*. The ſingle Point of Difference between a Wife and a Concubine is intimated

mated in his Hiſtory, ver. 5, 6. where it is ſaid, that *Abraham gave all that he had unto Iſaac, but unto the Sons of the Concubines which Abraham had (viz.* of *Hagar* and *Keturah) Abraham gave Gifts, and ſent them away.* The Iſſue by the Wife had greater Privilege, in reſpect of the Inheritance, than the Iſſue of the Concubine; and the Wife herſelf had greater Privilege in reſpect of Dowry, and Rank in the Family[f]. But in nothing did they differ in which the Marriage Bond was eſſentially concerned. For even in the Caſe of a Concubine, the Man was bound to provide for her and her Children, and ſhe to be faithful to his Bed; in which Point if ſhe tranſgreſſed, ſhe was looked upon as an Adultreſs. This appears from ſeveral Caſes recorded in Scripture. *Reuben*[t] *lay with Bilhah, his Father's Concubine*, Gen. xxxv. 22. which *Jacob* cenſures as wicked and

[f] *Concubina*, apud Hebræos, Stupri aut Lege aut Infamiâ, non tenebatur, cum a *Matrefamiliâs* tantùm *Dignitate* diſtaret, et eo quod liberis ex eâ natis Jus non eſſet ſuccedendi patribus in rebus ſoli. *Grot.* in *Matt.* v. 32.

[t] See the ſame Caſe in *Abſolom*, 2 *Sam.* xvi. 21, 22.

inceſtuous;

inceſtuous ; for ſhe was his *Wife*. Chap. xxx. 4. and xlix. 4. The *Levite's* Concubine is ſaid to have *played the* WHORE *againſt him*, Judg. xix. She was therefore his *Wife* ; and as ſuch ſhe is ſpoken of in the Sequel of the Hiſtory. For he is called her Huſband in the next Chapter, ver. 4. and her Father is called his *Father-in-law*, in this Chapter, ver. 47. So true it is, what *Selden* ſays, that a *Concubine* in thoſe Days differed from a Wife, *nomine tenus duntaxat, aut ſaltem dignitatis tantùm minoris ratione—Jugalem autem contractum nodumque, utrique eundem ipſum fuiſſe* [u], that is, " in Name only, or, at leaſt, in reſpect of " inferior Dignity only ; but that the " *Marriage Bond*, in regard to both, was " the ſame."

[u] *Ibid.* Lib. vii. Cap. 5. And the *Hebrew* Word which we tranſlate *Concubine*, agrees with this Account. For *Pilêgeſh* is uſually derived from *Palag*, to *divide*, and *Iſha*, *Woman*, or *Wife*. So that *Pilêgeſh* is, as it were, a *half* Wife, or a Wife of a *middle Condition*. In ſome reſpects *differing* from a Wife *eminently* ſo called, in others *the ſame* ; as has been above explained.

The

The Objection then at laſt comes to this; that anciently Men had more Wives than one: And this Liberty is indeed reſtrained by the Goſpel. For St. *Paul* ſays, *To avoid Fornication let every Man have his own Wife, and let every Woman have her own Huſband*, 1 Cor. vii. 2. For a Woman to have more Huſbands than one at once, was always unlawful; and the Apoſtle very plainly puts both Man and Woman upon the ſame Foot in this reſpect, without Difference or Diſtinction. The like Reſtraint is implied in thoſe Words of our Saviour, *Matt.* xix. 9. *Whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, and ſhall marry another, committeth Adultery; and whoſo marrieth her which is put away, doth commit Adultery.* As this is a direct Prohibition of Divorce (excepting as is elſewhere in the ſame Law excepted, of which hereafter) ſo it implies under it, I ſay, a Prohibition of Polygamy; for no Reaſon can be given why a Man's marrying a ſecond Wife, after having divorced the firſt, ſhould be Adultery, but this; that the Right of the firſt Wife ſtill

ſubſiſting,

ſubſiſting, notwithſtanding the Divorce (which our Saviour conſiders as a mere Nullity) ſuch a Man would, of courſe, have two Wives at once; and to treat this as Adultery, is in effect declaring the ſecond Match to be unlawful. Here then ariſes a Queſtion: How comes *Chriſt* to forbid what the Law of *Moſes* allowed? And let our Saviour himſelf give the Anſwer. *Moſes, becauſe of the Hardneſs of your Hearts, ſuffered you to put away your Wives; but from the Beginning it was not ſo.* For *have ye not read, that he which made them at the Beginning, made them Male and Female, and ſaid, For this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave to his Wife, and they Twain ſhall be one Fleſh? Wherefore they are no more Twain, but one Fleſh. What therefore God hath joined together let not Man put aſunder*, ver. 4—10. The Anſwer will alike ſerve to both of the Points in Queſtion; and no doubt it was our Saviour's Intention to ſay, that neither the putting away a Man's Wife (excepting as before) nor having more Wives than one at once, is agreeable to the original Inſtitution of Marriage. But how ſo? you will

aſk. Either theſe Things agree with the Natural Law, or they do not. If they do; why does *Chriſt* ſay, *From the Beginning it was not ſo?* Or what Ground will there be for his Prohibition? If they do not; how does it ſtand with God's moral Government, that *Moſes* ſhould have *ſuffered* them? Can God, conſiſtently with the Perfection of his Nature, at any time *diſpenſe* with the Natural Law? To this my Anſwer is, that theſe Things do indeed conſiſt with the Natural Law; but they ſo conſiſt with it, as not to reach to the Perfection of that State, which was originally intended by Providence in making Man Male and Female. The vague, promiſcuous Commerce (as I have heretofore obſerved) croſſes the firſt and principal End of Marriage; either as hindering Procreation; or as introducing an Uncertainty of Property in the Offspring; or as ſuppoſing an Inattention to that Care, which Nature hath laid upon Parents towards their Children. This therefore never was, nor ever can be permitted. But none of theſe Things can be objected to the Practice of having more Wives at once than one, which perfectly

perfectly well conſiſting with the Certainty of Property, and competently well with the parental Care, might therefore (for Reaſons of Providence) be permitted. And yet becauſe there are manifeſt Inconveniences in this State, to which that of one Wife to one Man is not liable, this Practice might again be reſtrained, the Reaſons ceaſing upon which the Permiſſion was grounded. The like may be ſaid of Divorce. For a Man's putting away his Wife introduces no Uncertainty of Property as to the Offspring already born; and though it be true, that in conſequence of the Separation, the parental Care which Nature hath bound equally upon both Parties, devolves upon one; yet the ſuppoſed Ground of Divorce brings this Matter much to the ſame Reckoning. For a Man may as well (and perhaps better) provide for his Children by his own ſole Induſtry, as in Company with an unequal Yoke-fellow.

But though theſe Things are tolerable, ſtill they are Deviations from the original Plan intended by Providence. *From the Beginning it was not ſo.* It is ſaid in the

Book of *Geneſis*, that God created Man *Male and Female*; that is, he gave one Woman to one Man, Chap. i. ver. 27. Of other living Creatures this is not ſaid. They are only bid to *be fruitful and multiply*; and there might at firſt have been more Females than Males, for any thing that the Hiſtory ſhews to the contrary. But one plain Diſtinction there is between Man and other living Creatures, which is, that as they, both Male and Female, were created out of the Earth, or Waters, the Man was made out of the Duſt of the Earth, and the Woman taken out of the Subſtance of the Man; to denote that cloſe and intimate Union intended between Man and Wife, which, between the Male and the Female in other kinds of Animals, neither was, nor could be intended. Upon which the Hiſtorian makes the Remark cited by our Saviour, *Therefore ſhall a Man leave his Father and his Mother, and ſhall cleave unto his Wife, and they ſhall be one Fleſh*; *i. e.* they ſhall be As one Fleſh; which excludes both *Multiplicity* and *Separation*, Gen. ii. 24.

Conſult

Conſult Nature in its firſt and moſt ſimple Motions, and you will find it agrees with this Appointment. The natural Paſſion directs itſelf to one, as diſtinguiſhed from all others of the ſame Sex; and even when Men indulge themſelves the Liberty of having more Wives than one, the Affection commonly ſettles in one. Whence this Proviſion in Nature (of which we find no Footſteps among the Brutes) but to ſhew that one Woman to one Man is our proper, natural State? Again; the conjugal Affection is obſerved to grow and improve by Years, unleſs checked by ſome irregular Paſſion, eſpecially if Children are born, the great Cement which holds Man and Wife together. And what does this ſhew leſs, than that as the Children have a Claim upon their Parents, that never dies till the Relation ceaſes; ſo the Relation between Man and Wife (upon which this other Relation is founded) ſhould never ceaſe, till the Hand of Providence puts an End to it? And as the natural Workings of human Paſſions beſt correſpond with this State, ſo Providence has ſet a ſtrong Guard about it, by the na-

tural Want which the Man and the Woman have of each other's Aſſiſtance. Brute wants not the Help of Brute, for Food, or for Raiment, or for any other Comfort of Life. If there are Exceptions to this Rule, they are of very ſhort Continuance, and then Nature unites them together by a kind of Marriage. We ſee this in many Creatures of the feathered Kind, where the Male attends the Female to feed and protect her, during the Time of her hatching her young. But Man and Wife conſtantly want each other's Help. The Woman wants the Man for Maintenance and Protection; and the Man wants the Woman, prudently to diſpenſe to the Uſes of his Family what he providently gathers: To be the Partner of his Cares and of his Comforts; his Help and Companion through every Stage of Life. And with how much a purer Stream the Bleſſings of the conjugal State will flow, when Affection is not divided among many, but united in one, a very little Reflection upon human Nature, or Obſervation of what commonly paſſes in the World, will ſerve to ſhew. But though theſe Conſiderations prove this to be

be the moſt perfect State, they will not prove that a State leſs perfect may not be diſpenſed with. God knows what is beſt for Man much better than he knows it himſelf; and if he will purſue the Method that ſimple, uncorrupted Nature points out to him, he will find the Benefit of it. Whenever he acts otherwiſe there is always ſomething wrong in the Cauſe; as in the Matter now before us. For (excepting the Want of Iſſue) what but mere Wantonneſs of Appetite can lead a Man to covet more Wives than one? What, to deſire a Separation, but ill Behaviour in one Party or the other, or in both? But if, for want of a proper Government of themſelves, Men diſqualify themſelves for enjoying the Bleſſings of the married State, in that Perfection which Nature intended they ſhould enjoy them; this indeed is a great Reproach to their Conduct; but neither the Wiſdom nor Juſtice of Providence will ſuffer any Impeachment, if, to avoid, it may be, worſe Evils, they are not preſently called to ſtricter Diſcipline, ſo long as the principal Ends of Marriage are preſerved, and that brutal, lawleſs Indulgence

is reſtrained, which, in the nobleſt Part of God's Works, would deſtroy the very Purpoſe of his Creation.

When it was that *Polygamy* firſt began to be in Uſe, or upon what Occaſion it was introduced, we have not Evidence enough in Hiſtory to inform us. *Adam*, it is certain, had but one Wife; *Noah* and his Sons, when they went into the Ark, had each but one [x] Wife; and in this whole Period between the Creation and the Flood, there is but one Inſtance upon Record, of any Perſon's having more than one Wife, and that is *Lamech*, who was a Deſcendant from *Cain*, and (as it may be preſumed) no very good Man. In the Time of *Abraham* it ſeems to have been cuſtomary. His Brother *Nahor* had two Wives, that is, a Wife and a [y] Concubine. He himſelf had two. And that this was not peculiar to his Family the Hiſtory of *Abimilech* ſhews; for he had a [z] Wife, at the Time when he ſent and took *Sarah* with Intent to make her his Wife. One cannot

[x] See *Gen.* vii. 13. [y] See *Gen.* xxii. 24.
[z] Chap. xx. ver. 17.

read

read this Part of the sacred Story without observing, in what Detestation the Sin of Adultery was held in those Days. God threatens nothing less than Destruction to *Abimelech* and his House, unless he restored to *Abraham* his Wife. *Abimelech* confesses the Justice of the Sentence in respect of the Sin, but pleads his Innocency in that he knew her not to be a married Woman, nor had indeed defiled her. With like Severity the Law of *Moses* was formed, by which it is ordered, that both the Man and the Woman should *be put to Death*, Levit. xx. 10. And this is all, I hope, that is needful to be said upon this Vice, which, though common in Practice, is so flagrant a Violation of natural Right, that none but the most abandoned will pretend to justify it. But *Polygamy*, it is certain, was not looked upon as a Crime in those Days; nor, strictly speaking, was it so. For there was no positive Law of God which forbad it; and in the Nature of it, it is something of the middle kind, neither simply and absolutely unlawful, nor yet fit to be encouraged. Nor do we find that God ever bestowed upon it any Marks of his

Approbation. The Old Teſtament records the Practice; but of the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of it nothing at all is ſaid. When *Nathan* the Prophet repreſented to *David* the great Mercies of God towards him, in order to raiſe in him a Senſe of his Ingratitude, he tells him indeed, that God *gave* him his *Maſter's Houſe, and his Maſter's Wives into his Boſom*, 2 Sam. xii. 8. but the Text does not ſay, that *David* took *Saul's* [a] Wives to be his Wives, nor are we obliged to underſtand by it any more than this, that they came into his Poſſeſſion with the reſt of his Subſtance; which ſhews the high State to which Providence had raiſed him, and this was all that the Prophet intended to ſhew. Nor are we to think otherwiſe of Divorce: For though the Law in *Deuteronomy*, Chap. xxiv. ver. 1. *When a Man hath taken a Wife—and ſhe find no Favour in his Eyes—let him write her a Bill of Divorcement*, &c. though, I ſay, this Law carries with it the Style of a Precept, yet our Saviour treats

[a] We read of but one Wife that *Saul* had, *Ahinoam*, the Daughter of *Ahimaaz*, 1 Sam. xiv. 50. And yet this Paſſage ſeems to import that he had ſeveral.

the

the putting away a Man's Wife, as a Matter of Sufferance only, and not as a Matter of Command; and rightly. For the Law refers to the Practice as [b] already subsisting; and (not defining whether it was right or wrong) only provides, that in case any Person should put away his Wife, he should do it in the Manner here directed. It is to be confessed, that he who gives a Law to regulate any Practice, must be understood, in the gross, as consenting to that Practice; and this, no doubt, is what our Saviour meant, when he told the *Jews*, that *Moses* SUFFERED them *to put away their Wives.* There is a Sense in which God suffers Things directly criminal, as when he does not punish for them, or when he does not give the Authors of them any special Call to Repentance; in which Sense *Paul* and *Barnabas* are to be understood, when they say, that God *suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways*, Acts xiv. 16. God cannot consent that Men should be wicked; and therefore this was only a Sufferance of Connivance, as St. *Paul* calls it, *Acts* xvii. 30. *The Times of this Ignorance*

[b] See *Levit.* xxi. 14. xxii. 13. and *Numb.* xxx. 9.

God

God WINKED *at*. But the preſcribing to the *Jews* the Manner how they ſhould put away their Wives (of which we find no Inſtance in any Caſes ſimply unlawful) ſhews, I ſay, that the Sufferance in this Caſe was a Sufferance of Conſent. But Conſent does not always imply Approbation. A Father may conſent that his Son ſhould do many Things that he does not like, leſt, if he ſhould refuſe, he might do ſomething bad; and this was the Caſe here. *Moſes* FOR THE HARDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS *ſuffered them to put away their Wives.*

If it ſhould be alledged, that the great Diſtinction with which God treated *Abraham* and his Family, ſhews that he approved their Behaviour in having ſeveral Wives at once; the Conſequence will go a great deal too far. For it will as well ſhew that he approved their Behaviour in other Reſpects, in which yet, it is certain, he neither did nor could approve it. Will you ſay that God approves Diſſimulation, becauſe both *Abraham* and *Iſaac* practiſed it with *Abimelech?* Or is Fraud and Falſhood therefore

right, becauſe *Jacob* practiſed it in obtaining the Bleſſing from his Brother *Eſau?* But the Truth in theſe Caſes is, that as the Diſtinction paid to *Abraham* and his Family was not merely for their own Sakes, but to ſerve ſome great and general Ends of God's Providence, which they might have been, and were, qualified to ſerve, though liable to many perſonal Failings; God was not obliged, in conſequence of this Diſtinction, to take any ſpecial Notice of ſuch perſonal Failings, or to call them to a Reformation, farther than as other Reaſons of Providence made it proper for him ſo to do; which Reaſons are not fixed and unchangeable, as the moral Precepts are, but ſubject to Variation, as the State and Circumſtances of the World vary. Now, if this is true in Things morally bad, it is much more ſo in Things of a middle Nature, *i. e.* not ſtrictly right, but tolerable; and this muſt be ſaid, that though (the original Intention of Marriage conſidered) Polygamy was an Abuſe, yet it was more tolerable in thoſe Days than it would be now, and there might (incidentally) have been a Convenience in ſuffering it. We

ſee

ſee from the Scripture Hiſtory, that the World was very thinly inhabited in *Abraham's* Time. For when he came firſt into the Land of *Canaan*, and dwelt there as a Stranger, we find none of the old Inhabitants of that Country, challenging him as having invaded their Property; and when his Brother *Lot* and he had lived ſo long near each other, that there began to be a Want of Room, and a Contention aroſe between their Herdſmen, *Abraham* propoſed a Separation, and ſaid to his Brother, *Is not the whole Land before thee? If thou wilt take the left Hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right Hand then I will go to the left*, Gen. xiii. 9. And as the World was then unacquainted with thoſe Arts of Living which Luxury has ſince introduced, and Men ſubſiſted only by Huſbandry and feeding Cattle, they might with great Eaſe to themſelves, and with no Inconvenience to their Neighbours, maintain large Families. There can be no doubt but that the Indulgence of Polygamy very much contributed to the ſpeedy Execution of that Promiſe made to *Abraham*, that he ſhould be *the Father of many Nations*,

Nations, and that his Poſterity ſhould come back again to inherit the Land wherein he was then but a Sojourner. *Jacob* went down into *Egypt*, with his Sons by all his Wives, which were a large Family; and when they had the Land of *Goſhen* aſſigned them for their Dwelling (where, it may be preſumed, the ſame Liberty was taken) when the Time appointed drew near, their great Increaſe opened the Way to their Deliverance. But whatever were the Reaſons why this Practice was permitted in thoſe Days (with which perhaps we are not perfectly well acquainted) they make no Change in the Nature of it as right or wrong, but leave it juſt as they find it.

The Reſult then is this; that Polygamy and Divorce, not being ſimply and abſolutely unlawful, God might allow them, for a Time; and yet, the married State under theſe Circumſtances falling ſhort of that Perfection which Providence intended from its firſt Inſtitution, he might, when it ſhould become ſeaſonable, again reſtrain them. And it would indeed be very

ſtrange

ſtrange if we ſhould deny that Power to the ſupreme Legiſlator, which every State or Kingdom exerciſeth by civil Authority. The *Roman* Laws did not allow of more Wives than one; nor the *Grecian* [c], ordinarily at leaſt. No doubt becauſe it was found inconvenient to Society, for Men to have a Multiplicity of Wives. And certain it is, that Inconveniences there are. For, beſides that the Affairs of private Families will be beſt carried on, when the Wife, beſtowing herſelf entirely on the Huſband, receives the equal Return of his whole Heart and Affection, the Allowance of Polygamy (as a very great Writer obſerves) will in Time have this Conſequence, that "the nobler Families will (by too great a "Number of Children) be reduced to Po-"verty; the meaner to Beggary; and the "State oppreſſed with an idle Swarm of "the baſer Populacy [d]." This Reaſoning ſuppoſes, that the Practice of Polygamy contributes to the Multiplication of the Species, more than ſingle Marriages; and unqueſtionably it does, upon Suppoſition

[c] See *Puffendorff De Jur. N. & G.* Lib. vi. c. 1. § 14. [d] Id. ibid. § 19.

that

that there are Women enough to ſupply each Man with ſeveral Wives. But whether there is that Diſproportion between the Number of each Sex, ordinarily born into the World, as will ſupport this Practice in Perpetuity, may juſtly be made a Queſtion; and if there is not, Civil Government will find it neceſſary to reſtrain it ſomewhere, leſt it run into Intercommunity, of all Evils, in this kind, the moſt intolerable.

In reſpect of Divorce, it will be neceſſary to conſider, how far it is reſtrained by the Law of *Chriſt*. By the Queſtion which the *Phariſee* put to our Saviour, *Matt.* xix. 3. it ſhould ſeem, that it was cuſtomary at that Time, among the *Jews*, for Men to put away their Wives by arbitrary Will and Pleaſure; for they aſk, *Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for* EVERY CAUSE? It is very natural to ſuppoſe, that this Queſtion was raiſed upon the Law of *Moſes*, *Deut.* xxiv. 1. which (ſays [e] *Selden*) the *Jewiſh* Doctors inter-

[e] See *Uxor Hæb.* Lib. iii. cap. 22, 23. & *Puffend.* Ibid.

preted

preted variouſly; ſome holding that a Man ought not to put away his Wife, unleſs upon ſome Diſcovery of Baſeneſs or Turpitude; whilſt others maintained, that any Diſlike taken againſt the Woman, was enough to juſtify a Divorce. And it is to be confeſſed, that the Law leaves Handle enough for ſuch Diſputes; for thus it runs, *When a Man hath taken a Wife and married her, and it come to paſs that ſhe find no Favour in his Eyes, becauſe he hath found ſome Uncleanneſs in her, then let him write her a Bill of Divorcement*, &c. The Law, you ſee, appoints no Judge between Man and Wife, but leaves every Man to his own Diſcretion; and it not being diſtinctly ſpecified of what Sort this Uncleanneſs ſhould be, here was room left for every one to put away his Wife who had no Mind to keep her. Let us now attend to our Saviour's Anſwer, *Have ye not read, that he which made them at the Beginning made them Male and Female?* &c.—*What therefore God hath joined together let not Man put aſunder.* In which Anſwer it is evident, that without entering at all into the Queſtion, in what Caſes the Law of *Moſes* did

or

or did not allow of Divorce, our Saviour impeaches the Law itſelf; and ſo the *Jews* underſtood him, as appears by their Anſwer: *Why did Moſes then command to give a Writing of Divorcement?* Which is as if they had ſaid,—"You ſeem to ſay, that "Divorce is in no caſe allowable: But "why then did *Moſes* allow it?" Our Saviour anſwers, *Moſes, becauſe of the Hardneſs of your Hearts, ſuffered you to put away your Wives, but from the Beginning it was not ſo.* Here our Saviour again impeaches the Law, and in effect declares, that *Moſes*, for the Hardneſs of their Hearts, allowed a Liberty in this Caſe which was not agreeable to the original Inſtitution of Marriage, to which original Inſtitution it was his Intention to recall them; and then he goes on to ſhew, in what Caſes He allowed thoſe who would be his Diſciples, to put away their Wives; *And I ſay unto you, Whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication*, &c. In which Words he corrects the Generality of his firſt Anſwer, and ſhews them that it was not to be underſtood without

Exception, and yet with ſuch Exception, as would ſtill leave a conſiderable Diſtinction between his Law and the Law of *Moſes*. This will be farther evident from what is ſaid upon the ſame Subject, Chap. v. ver. 31. *It hath been ſaid, Whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement*; BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, *That whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, ſaving for the Cauſe of Fornication*, &c. Here our Saviour places his own Law, and the Law of *Moſes*, in the way of Oppoſition to each other; and the neceſſary Conſtruction is, that the one allowed a Liberty in the Matter of Divorce, which the other alloweth not.

Let us now conſider where the Diſtinction lies. And if you underſtand *the Cauſe of Fornication* in our Saviour's Law, to mean Unfaithfulneſs to the Marriage Bed, it will be very plain. For undoubtedly the Law of *Moſes* allowed of Divorce in Cauſes of an inferior Nature. The Words are—*If ſhe find* NO FAVOUR *in his eyes, becauſe he hath found ſome* UNCLEANNESS *in her*; which

which deſcribes ſome Cauſe of Diſlike on the Part of the Wife, not a Violation of the Marriage Contract; which, had it been the Thing intended, would have been expreſſed in much ſtronger Terms. And it ſhould be remembered, that by the Law of *Moſes* Adultery was puniſhed by Death, and therefore ſtands excluded from the Cauſes of Divorce. By the natural Law, Adultery is a juſtifiable Cauſe of Separation; and *Chriſt* in his Anſwer ſhews, that what the natural Law directs to in ſuch Circumſtances, he had no Intention to controul. But then it muſt farther be obſerved, that as our Saviour refers himſelf to the original Inſtitution of Marriage, for his Determination upon the Matter of Divorce, it muſt by equitable Conſtruction be underſtood, that in excepting the Caſe of Adultery, he has, virtually, excepted all Caſes that ſtand within the ſame Reaſon; that is, all in which there are Impediments that will not conſiſt with the firſt and principal End of Marriage. But if you carry your Exceptions farther, and interpret the Cauſe of Fornication, ſo as to include every kind of ill Behaviour which may give juſt Cauſe

of Offence (as Mr. *Selden*[f] ſeems to have done) you will indeed leave little room for Unbelievers to object againſt the Severity of *Chriſt's* Law; but then you will find it hard to ſupport the Diſtinction between the Law of *Chriſt* and the Law of *Moſes*. For if the Law of *Chriſt* allows of Divorce for every Cauſe of Offence, the Law of *Moſes* could do no more, and ſo *Chriſt* and *Moſes* will be *agreed*; which is contrary to the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Diſcourſe upon this Subject.

Taking the thing then in this Light (in which, I think, I have the beſt Authorities to ſupport me) *viz.* That whereas the Law of *Moſes*, and of all other Nations, allowed Men the Liberty to put away their Wives, for *lower Cauſes* of Diſlike, *Jeſus Chriſt* forbids his Followers to put away their Wives, except in the Cauſes which croſs the firſt and principal Intention of Marriage; Where, I aſk, is the Fault? Will you ſay that it is not better for Man and Wife to correct thoſe leſſer Faults in themſelves, which make them diſagreeable

[f] Ibid.

to

to each other, than to diſſolve the matrimonial Bond? An Adultereſs, by the very Act, for ever forfeits all Right to her Huſband's Confidence, without which one great End of Marriage, which is the aſcertaining the Huſband's Property in the Offspring, is deſtroyed; and there may be Impediments of other kinds; which in the Nature of things are not corrigible. But every Perſon, that will take the pains for it, may bridle thoſe Paſſions which lead to Offences of an inferior kind; which will preſerve thoſe Bleſſings to the married State, that Providence originally intended, and mend the whole moral Character. There are indeed ſuppoſable States of the World, when this is not ordinarily to be expected, and in that Caſe Wiſdom will direct to abate ſomething in the Rigour of one Law (in the Nature of it diſpenſable) to preſerve due Reverence to others of equal, or of greater Importance; and our Saviour intimates, as has afore been obſerved, that this was the Caſe under the Legal Diſpenſation, and the Reaſon why *Moſes* ſuffered them to put away their Wives. God himſelf, no doubt, beſt knows to what State of things,

what ſort of Diſcipline is beſt ſuited, and therefore it would be abſurd to diſpute with our Saviour the Truth of his Obſervation. But if it was ever proper to call Men to Order in theſe Points, ſurely it was under that Diſpenſation, whoſe End is to bring in univerſal Righteouſneſs; to clear the natural Law from thoſe Corruptions which Ignorance had introduced, and to advance it to its original Perfection. And He ſurely had full Right to be the Miniſter of ſuch a Reformation, who came with Motives to enforce, and with Aſſiſtances to ſupport the Obedience of his Law, far ſuperior to all other Teachers or Lawgivers that had gone before him. It is, I confeſs, but too viſible from common Obſervation, that this Reſtraint of the Liberty of Divorce as ill agrees with the Spirit of ſome Chriſtians, as it did with the Spirit of the *Jews* or Heathens. But let ſuch blame, not the Law, but themſelves. The Law ſhews them their true Intereſt if they will follow it; if they will not, it is more reaſonable that they ſhould bear the ill Conſequences of it themſelves, than that the Hands of Providence ſhould be for ever tied up from

offering ſuch Regulations as are uſeful in reſpect of the general good, to ſerve which, if Mankind will act reaſonably, this Reſtraint is unqueſtionably calculated. It may bear hard in ſome particular Inſtances, as, more or leſs, all good Laws do and will. But theſe Evils are better borne, than a Remedy attempted, by indulging a Liberty that can never be generally wanted, but in Times of general Corruption, and which, in Concert with other Species's of Licentiouſneſs, will help to haſten the Ruin of Families and of Kingdoms. A great Writer before quoted ſays, that "one may "reckon among the chief Cauſes of the "Decay and Corruption of the *Roman* "State, their too frequent Practice of Di-"vorces, either upon ſlight Pretences or "none at all; which was ſo great, that, as "*Seneca* reports, many Ladies of Emi-"nence and Quality reckoned their Years, "not by the Number of Conſuls, but of "their Huſbands, and were divorced in "hopes of marrying, and married in hopes "of being divorced[h]." And how near an Alliance a Reſerve in this Point has with the national Virtue, may be ſeen from

[h] *Puffend.* ibid. § 21.

what the ſame and other Writers have obſerved, *viz.* That though the *Roman* Laws did not forbid Divorce, Hiſtory affords no Inſtance of the Practice of it, till above five hundred Years after the building of the City.

I have not thought it needful to be very particular in ſetting forth the Inconveniences either of Polygamy or Divorce, which are to be met with in almoſt every Writer upon this Subject; and which indeed every one's own Thoughts will readily ſuggeſt to him: And let it always be remembered, in conſidering theſe Points, that theſe Inconveniencies eſſentially adhere to the States themſelves, and do not ariſe from ill Conduct in the Parties concerned, as the Inconveniences on the other ſide ordinarily do; which makes a very conſiderable Difference in the two Caſes. But I judged it very neceſſary to be diſtinct upon theſe Subjects, being ſenſible that great Prejudices againſt the Goſpel have ariſen from the ſeeming Severity of this Branch of *Chriſt's* Law; and an unreaſonable Severity (poſſibly) it will appear to many, if it be conſidered as founded *merely* on the Authority of *Chriſt*. For though it cannot be doubted but that

God

God hath Authority to reſtrain the natural Rights of Men if he ſees ſo fit, and actually hath done ſo in leſſer Matters, the better to ſecure the Obedience of the moral Law in greater Inſtances, as will be hereafter ſhewn; yet I conceive it would be no eaſy Matter to ſhew a Reaſon why he ſhould oblige a Man to keep a Wife whom he does not like, if in the Nature of the thing it was juſt as right to put her away; or why he ſhould confine him to one Wife, if it made no Difference as to the Natural Law whether he has one or many. I have therefore endeavoured to ſhew, that theſe Laws concerning *Polygamy* and *Divorce* have a much higher Original, and are indeed the Natural Law itſelf in its *Perfection*; which is placing theſe Laws upon the very Foundation upon which *Chriſt* himſelf has placed them, who does not refer them to his own *ſole* Authority, but to the *original* Inſtitution of Marriage.—FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO.

It is now time that we proceed to ſome Matters of another kind: And the next Branch of our Saviour's Law that will pro-

perly fall under our Conſideration, is that which concerns our Conduct in reference to thoſe who offer Injury to us, and from whom we have received Injury. In reſpect of the firſt, our Saviour lays down this Rule: *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth. But I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not Evil; but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other alſo. And if any Man will ſue thee at the Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alſo.* Matt. v. 38—40. In reſpect of the ſecond, this; *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy. But I ſay unto you, Love your Enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you,* ver. 43, 44. Theſe are looked upon as *hard Sayings*, by the angry and revengeful, as the Laws concerning Marriage are, by the voluptuous and intemperate. But I ſhall prove, that neither in theſe Points has *Chriſt* advanced any thing as of general Obligation, but what the natural Law contains.

To

To begin with the firſt, *Reſiſt not Evil*, &c. It will be neceſſary, in order to come at the true Meaning of it, to conſider the Nature of the Law to which it ſtands oppoſed; which is that Law commonly called the *Lex talionis*, or Law of *Retaliation* appointed by *Moſes*, of which we find mention *Deut.* xix. 16—21. and in ſeveral other Places. *If a falſe Witneſs riſe up againſt any Man, to teſtify againſt him that which is wrong; then both the Men between whom the Controverſy is ſhall ſtand before the Lord, before the Prieſts and the Judges—and if the Witneſs be a falſe Witneſs—then ſhall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his Brother—Life ſhall go for Life, Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth, Hand for Hand, Foot for Foot.* We are to obſerve, that this Law gave no Permiſſion to *private* Revenge; for the Matter was to be brought before the *Judges*, who were to give Sentence as they ſhould find Cauſe. For this Reaſon the Law of *Chriſt*, not to *reſiſt Evil* (which here ſtands in Oppoſition to what *Moſes* appointed) can have nothing to do with private Revenge; but muſt relate

to

to Puniſhment obtained by legal Methods. There would have been no ſort of Propriety in ſaying, " *Moſes* appointed Offenders to " be ſo or ſo puniſhed by the Sentence of " the Law; but I ſay unto you, let no " Man cauſe another to ſuffer for Injury " committed, without the Sentence of the " Law." This advances nothing: For the Law of *Moſes* admitted not of private Methods of Retaliation, any more than the Law of *Chriſt*. But the Anſwer will come with great Appoſiteneſs and Force, if you will ſuppoſe our Saviour to have ſpoken to this Effect; " I know that by *Moſes*'s Law " you may demand an Eye for an Eye, and " a Tooth for a Tooth. But I ſay unto " you, decline all Methods of Retaliation, " patiently ſuffer whatever Indignities or " Wrongs ye may ſuffer for my Sake; nor " ſeek Redreſs from human Tribunals." With this Interpretation, what follows perfectly well agrees. *Whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other alſo. And if any Man will ſue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alſo. And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.*

Theſe

These Expressions import a perfect *Passiveness* under every kind of ill Treatment; and there are other Directions in Scripture which come up to the same Meaning. *Behold I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves; be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*, Matt. x. 16. And ver. 23, *When they persecute you in this City, flee ye into another.* They were to take all prudent Precaution to avoid Mischief; but if it overtook them, they had nothing else to do but to *flee* from it. They were not to *resist*; they were not to *impeach* in Courts of Justice.

These two last Directions, I confess, make part of a Discourse which *Christ* is said to have spoken to his twelve Apostles, when he sent them forth to preach; whereas the Law now in Question, was given to *all* his Disciples. But this Circumstance, I think, will make no material Difference in the Argument. For the whole Number of *Christ's* Disciples was then but small; and (probably) most of them such as were afterwards to be sent forth to preach the Gospel; and there will be nothing forced and

unnatural in ſuppoſing that our Saviour's Diſcourſe might (in ſome parts of it) have a ſpecial Relation to their Conduct, conſidered in the Capacity of ſuch as were to be the Inſtruments of propagating the Goſpel throughout the World; which common Senſe would eaſily diſtinguiſh from thoſe Precepts which were of *univerſal* and *perpetual* Obligation, when the Reaſons upon which the Speciality was grounded, ſhould be at an End. And it may farther be very juſtly ſaid, that the Caſe of all the firſt Chriſtians was alike in this Reſpect. They were ALL to be the Examples of patient Suffering, and reſtrained from having Recourſe to the common Methods of Redreſs, that the Power of God might be the more viſible in their Preſervation. *When ye ſhall be brought before Kings and Rulers for my Name's Sake—ſettle it in your Hearts not to meditate before what ye ſhall anſwer. For I will give you a Mouth and Wiſdom*, Luke xxi. 12. I; that is, *I, by my extraordinary Power and Preſence* with you, *will give*, &c. And this, they are told, was to be *for a Teſtimony*, Matt. x. 18. Luke xxi. 13. And as they were to depend upon God's

God's extraordinary Providence for Protection againſt the Malice of Men; ſo they were alſo (without any Forecaſt of their own) to depend upon it for the common Neceſſaries of Life. *Provide neither Gold nor Silver nor Braſs in your Purſes, nor Scrip for your Journey, neither two Coats, neither Shoes, nor yet Staves*, Matt. x. 9. *Grotius* hath rightly obſerved, that when they are forbidden to carry *Staves*, the Meaning is, that they ſhould have no more Staves than what they carried in their Hands for the Conveniency of Travelling; juſt as when they are forbidden to carry Shoes, the Meaning is, that they ſhould carry no more than they had on their Feet; for it is not to be ſuppoſed that they travelled barefoot. Accordingly, in the Account which St. *Mark* gives of this Matter, our Saviour allows each of them a *Staff*, but nothing elſe. *Take nothing for your Journey, ſave a Staff only*, Chap. vi. ver. 8. But Weapons of Defence they were to have none; Gold or Silver they were to have none; Bread or Change of Garments they were not to have. In all Inſtances in which any of theſe Things could be uſeful or neceſſary, they were to rely

rely upon God only to provide for them, as in his Wiſdom it ſhould ſeem moſt expedient.

This meek, *paſſive* Spirit, in bearing Injuries, was one of the grand Characteriſtics of the Meſſiah, as foretold by the Prophets. *He ſhall not cry, nor lift up, nor cauſe his Voice to be heard in the Street*, Iſai. xlii. 2. *I gave my Back to the Smiters, and my Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair*, Chap. l. 6. *He was oppreſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth. He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before his Shearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his Mouth*, Chap. liii. 7. Our Saviour's whole Life anſwers to this Deſcription. In all his Sufferings he was perfectly paſſive, and rebuked his Diſciples when they would have had Recourſe to violent Methods of Defence, *Matt.* xxvi. 52. And how congruous was it, that thoſe who under the Power of his own Spirit were ſent forth to finiſh the Work which he had begun, ſhould be enjoined the ſame Behaviour? They *were* enjoined it; nor in vain. They ſuffered Indignities

of

of all kinds; but where do we ever read of their striving, or fighting, or impleading in Courts of Justice? *Christ* told them, that they should be *brought before Governors and Kings for his Sake.* This they could not help; but they were to bring no Man thither; nor do we find they ever did. For though St. *Paul appealed to Cæsar's Judgment Seat*; it was not till after he had been apprehended of the *Jews*, and brought before *Festus* the *Roman* Governor, who *to do the Jews a Pleasure*, asked him, *Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these Things?* Acts xxv. 9. The *Jews* were his Accusers; he was not their Accuser. Judged he *must* be *somewhere*, which he refuseth not, but appeals to the proper Judge.

Taking then the Law in Question to have a *special* Respect to the State of Christianity, when the Gospel was first to be published to the World, and when the *miraculous* Power of God, in the Preservation of its first Professors, was to stand as one part of the *Evidence* of its divine Authority; Placing (I say) the Law in this Light, it will, in the very

Letter of it, ſtand clear of all reaſonable Exception. For where is the Fault, that *Chriſt* ſhould reſtrain thoſe from uſing the common legal Methods of Defence, whom he had taken under his own extraordinary Care and Protection? Here was, it is true, a Reſtraint upon natural Liberty; but they had more than an Equivalent for it. But if you will ſuppoſe this Precept to be a Law which concerns all Chriſtians, there will then be a Neceſſity of underſtanding it with due Qualifications; not as abſolutely forbidding the Uſe of legal Remedies in caſe of Injuries, but as reſtraining that Liberty within certain Bounds, as Reaſon and good Senſe, directed by Juſtice and Charity, ſhall require; that is (in other Words) the Law of *Chriſt* muſt receive its Interpretation from the natural Law, and conſequently will be one and the ſame with it. The Reaſon is, becauſe an abſolute Prohibition of legal Remedies, in effect, ſuperſedes the Magiſtrate's Office, and deſtroys the Rights of Civil Society, which we are very ſure it was not our Saviour's Intention to do. *Render unto Cæſar the Things which are Cæſar's*, was his Maxim. To pay Tribute when demanded, was his Practice;

which is a virtual Acknowledgment of the Rights of Civil Society. And when a certain Man ſaid to him, *Maſter, ſpeak to my Brother, that he divide the Inheritance with me*; his Anſwer was, *Who made* ME *a Judge or Divider over you?* Luke xii. 13, 14. Which Anſwer admits, that there *were* proper Judges in ſuch Caſes *ſomewhere*, and denies only that *his* Office extended to any ſuch Matters. His Apoſtle, St. *Paul*, is full and ſtrong in this Point, as you may ſee at large, *Rom.* xiii. 1—7. and *Tit.* iii. 1. And St. *Peter*, 1 *Ep.* ii. 13, 14. *Submit yourſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake; whether it be to the King as ſupreme; or unto Governors as unto them that are ſent by him, for the Puniſhment of evil Doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well.* But though all this implies, that Appeals to the Magiſtrate are lawful and fit, upon a general View of the Caſe, yet Circumſtances may make it improper in particular Caſes. We have ſeen the Reaſon (if the Interpretation I have given be admitted) why our Saviour forbad his Apoſtles making ſuch Appeals againſt their Perſecutors; and for like Reaſons we find St. *Paul* blaming the *Corinthians*, for

haling each other before Heathen Tribunals, in Diſputes between themſelves. What is *lawful* may not always be *expedient*. This is as true now in Multitudes of Caſes as it was then. But it is to be obſerved, that when Prudence interpoſes to prevent Appeals to the Magiſtrate, it is not *Chriſt*, or his Law, that reſtrains Natural Right, but it is the Natural Law itſelf that ſuſpends its own Execution.

Let us go on then to the ſecond Branch of our Saviour's Rule. *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy. But I ſay unto you, Love your Enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you.* It is to be remarked, that the Oppoſition here lies not between *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, but between *Chriſt* and the corrupt Interpreters of *Moſes*. *Moſes* ſaid *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour*. But *Moſes* never ſaid, *Thou ſhalt hate thine Enemy*; as the following Paſſages fully prove, *Thou ſhalt not avenge nor bear any Grudge againſt the Children of thy People, but thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf—And if a Stranger*

Stranger sojourn with thee in your Land, ye shall not vex him; but the Stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, Levit. xix. 18. 33. 34. Again, *Exod.* xxiii. 4, 5. *If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his Burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him.* With all which that Precept of the wise Man well agrees, *If thine Enemy be hungry, give him Bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him Water to drink*, Prov. xxv. 21. We see hence, that there is one and the same Spirit in the Law of *Moses* and in the Law of *Christ*, and both are but the Transcript of the original Law of Nature. To *hate* any Person implies a Disposition to do him Mischief, and to repay one bad Turn by another; which is a Breach of the natural Law. Some of the heathen Philosophers justified Revenge; but one of the [i] wisest of them hath said, οὐ δεῖ, οὐδ' ἀδικούμενον ἀντα-δικεῖν; "It is not lawful even for him "that is ill treated to treat another ill." And

[i] *Socrates*, in *Plat. Critone.*

Reaſon is clearly on his Side. For though the Law of Nature allows of Self-Defence, and every Wrong done, naturally calls for Puniſhment to be inflicted upon the Tranſgreſſor; yet to avoid thoſe obvious and manifold Inconveniences that would ariſe if every Man was left to judge for himſelf in ſuch Caſes, and to proportion the Retaliation to the Senſe which *he* has of the Wrong done, Nature directs to SOCIETY; and the very Moment a Man becomes a Member of Society, he muſt be underſtood as having diveſted himſelf of his natural Right in theſe Caſes, and as having placed it in the Hands of the Magiſtrate as the common Umpire. Upon this Principle (excepting only Caſes of immediate Neceſſity, where the Laws of Society cannot interpoſe for Protection, and which the Goſpel leaves as it finds them) all private Repulſion of Force by Force, and every private Method by which Men are afflicted or puniſhed, merely on the Score of wrong doing, is a manifeſt Invaſion of the Magiſtrate's Office, and, ſo far as it goes, a Defiance of the Rights of Society. Every Deviation from the Goſpel Rule in this Matter

Matter falls within the ſame Concluſion. For take it in our Saviour's own Words, *Love your Enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you:* Or take it as St. *Paul* ſtates it, *Rom.* xii. 20. *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him Drink;* the Amount will be the ſame. To *love*, to *pray*, and to *bleſs*; to give *Meat* to the *hungry*, and *Drink* to the *thirſty*, are Acts of Benevolence naturally due to all Men in common; and if I refuſe to diſcharge this common Debt, becauſe I have received an Injury, is it not clear that I take upon me to exerciſe that Right of judging and puniſhing that Injury, which, as a Member of Society, I muſt be underſtood to have diſclaimed? It is not ſo when I only refuſe to treat a Perſon who has done me wrong with ſpecial Confidence and Friendſhip; for this is not with-holding a common Debt, nor do I take upon me to judge the Offence, or to puniſh the Offender merely on the Score of wrong doing; but judging of the Man by the Offence, I with-hold a Truſt, in the Diſpoſal of which I am na-

turally free, and for which the Offence ſhews him to be unqualified. It is very neceſſary to diſtinguiſh theſe two Caſes, becauſe the Goſpel Law has much to do with the one, and nothing at all with the other. For Benevolence and Charity may be exerciſed towards thoſe with whom no Friendſhip can ſubſiſt. This is all that the Goſpel obliges to, and this Nature itſelf teaches, and powerfully excites to. Therefore we may obſerve, that this Precept, to *love our Enemies*, is not enforced by any Conſiderations in which the *Authority* of *Chriſt* is ſpecially concerned, but left to reſt, both by our Saviour and St. *Paul*, upon its own *natural* Foundation. The *firſt* reaſons upon a Principle of *natural Equity*, when he ſays, *That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good*, &c. the *latter*, upon a Principle of *natural Utility*, when he ſays, *For in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap Coals of Fire on his Head.*

If it ſhould be objected to that Precept of our Saviour, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour*

bour AS THYSELF, that it is *impracticable*, the Anſwer is, that this Law was originally the Law of *Moſes*, from whom our Saviour cites it; and there can be no queſtion but each of theſe Legiſlators had one and the ſame Meaning, *viz.* Not that we ſhould love our Neighbour with the ſame *Solicitude* of *Paſſion* wherewith we love ourſelves, which is indeed impoſſible; but, that we ſhould behave towards him with the ſame *Integrity* of *Conduct*, which is both poſſible and reaſonable. To love our Neighbour as *ourſelves*, is to act *as if we had* the ſame Tenderneſs of Concern for him as we have for ourſelves; and this Precept will be fulfilled in the moſt complete and perfect Senſe, when we obſerve that golden Rule of *Chriſt*, which, in reſpect of that Duty which we owe to our Neighbour, is the Sum and Subſtance of the *natural* Law. *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I have now gone through every thing that may ſeem exceptionable in the Law of *Chriſt*; for as to all other Laws in which the

the Government of our Paſſions are concerned, they are plainly nothing more than what the Law of Nature teaches. You will find no other Rule as to eating or drinking, or the Uſe of any natural Paſſion, than what you will find in *Ariſtotle* or *Cicero*, or any other good moral Writer; for as to that kind of *Abſtinence* which we properly term *religious*, ſeparate from it the Abuſes of Superſtition (with which the Goſpel is nothing concerned) and it will appear to be nothing more than a *prudential* Oeconomy in the Uſe of thoſe things that relate to the Body, ſerving to aſſiſt the Mind in its more noble Operations, and to guard it againſt the Inroads of thoſe groſs and ſenſual Affections which are wont to draw us aſide from thoſe Purſuits which are proper to us as reaſonable Creatures. It ſhould be obſerved, that *Chriſt* was not the Author of this Sort of Diſcipline. He only approved what good Men had anciently practiſed, not by any *divine Appointment*, that we read of, but, moſt probably, led to it by its Congruity to Nature, and the Experience of its Uſefulneſs to preſerve to the Mind its proper State and Temper. It is *thus far* therefore,

fore, and thus far *only*, that we are to conſider it as the Law of *Chriſt*; and *thus far* it is as clearly *Nature's* Law, as it is *his*.

By this Time then, I hope, we have fully ſecured our general Point, that, in reſpect of the Government of our Paſſions, the Goſpel lays no greater Burden upon us, than what the Law of Nature impoſes; and that therefore if this is a Reaſon why we ſhould reject the Goſpel, it is as good a Reaſon why we ſhould lay aſide Natural Religion too, and turn mere Atheiſts. This, I am afraid, is too frequently the Caſe. When Men led away by ſtrong Paſſions, grow impatient of the Reſtraints of Religion, and to eaſe themſelves, as they hope, renounce Chriſtianity; they very quickly find, that there is no Safety for them ſo long as there is a *God* left to judge and puniſh them, and ſo the next Step is to deny his Being or his Providence, or both. My Buſineſs at preſent lies not directly with *Atheiſts*; and yet becauſe I would do full Juſtice to this *Prejudice*, that the Law of *Chriſt* is hard and ſevere, and ſhame it (if it were poſſible) out of all Countenance, I will go yet one

Step

Step farther, and ſhew, that if they ſhould be diſpoſed to take refuge in the laſt wretched Reſort, it would not ſerve their Turn. What ſenſual Men would have, is, I ſuppoſe, a full, unreſtrained Indulgence of ſenſual Appetite. But whether a Man hath Religion, or whether he hath none; in the Nature of things this cannot be. For ſetting aſide all thoſe Caſes (which are very many) where the Means of gratifying our Appetites are not in our Power; there are a Variety of Reſtraints, which, View being had to the Happineſs of this Life only, mere human Prudence will lay us under. As for Inſtance;

1. The Law of *Self-Preſervation* will direct us not to indulge our Appetites beyond our natural Strength; for this will both ſhorten and embitter Life, and the painful Conſequences will more than balance the Pleaſures. In this reſpect we differ from the Brutes. *They* have Strength equal to the Extent of Appetite; *we* have not. A Man may kill a Beaſt by unſkilful Management; but turn him looſe to the common Products of the Earth, and he will not

not die with ſurfeiting. The natural Powers of every Creature are wiſely adjuſted to their natural Wants. Beaſts want not Reaſon to reſtrain Appetite, and therefore they have it not. But Man has Reaſon; and in no Inſtance is there greater Uſe of it than in ſetting Bounds to Appetite, which does not end (as in Brutes) where his natural Wants end, but urges on, and, if indulged in all its Cravings, will haſten him with Speed to his own Deſtruction.

2. The Indulgence of Appetite ſuppoſeth the natural Means; as Meat, when we are hungry; Drink, when we are thirſty; and the like: Which Means, Providence hath not provided for all in equal Proportion, but diſtributed in various Meaſure; to ſome much, and to others little. This therefore introduces a Neceſſity of Management and Contrivance, ſo to adjuſt our Expences to our Circumſtances, that our Stock may hold out for the Time we ſhall probably want it; and that we may not (as a very excellent Writer expreſſes it) "ſacrifice a great Sum to a ſmall; Years to "Months or Days; and the Entertain-

"ment

" ment of our whole Life, to the Rage of " a very ſmall Part of it [k]." What does a Man gain by rioting in Youth, to lay up for himſelf a ſtarving, or a wretched old Age? Is it reaſonable, in order to avoid a lower kind of Reſtraint, to draw upon yourſelf that Neceſſity which will force you to ſubmit to a greater, whether you will or no? True it is, that when the Comforts of Life are gone, there will always be one Remedy left, which is to put an End to a miſerable Being; and it is a Remedy which many make uſe of. But is there nothing loſt by this? Yes; unleſs you will ſay, that if you may not indulge beyond the Bounds of Reaſon, what you may indulge within thoſe Bounds is not worth owning; which to aſſert were groſs Folly.

3. There is yet one Rule of Prudence more not to be omitted, which is, that no Man ſhould indulge ſenſual Appetite to another Man's Wrong. If you have Appetites, others have them as well as you; and what prompts one to injure, will

[k] Bp. *Weſton*, Serm. Vol. I. p. 416.

prompt

prompt the injured Perſon to defend, or to repay. Should all Men ſet out with a Reſolution to lay their Hands upon every thing they could come at, which would ſerve as an Inſtrument to gratify Appetite, it would introduce a State of War, in which the Weak would become a Prey to the Strong; the Conſequence of which would be, the Deſtruction of the whole Race. This Miſchief is prevented by the Laws of Civil Society, which are plainly a Reſtraint upon Appetite, and confeſſed to be a juſt and a neceſſary one, by all the World.

Theſe Conſiderations abundantly ſhew, that the Neceſſity of *Self-Denial* is not *created* by Religion, but founded in the Nature and Conſtitution of Things. So that if theſe Objectors will ſay, that *Providence* has dealt hardly by them, they muſt ſay, that their *Fate*, or their *Chance*, (or by what other Name ſoever they ſhall think fit to deſcribe that Power which brought this univerſal Syſtem together) has dealt hardly by them too; and a new World muſt be made to pleaſe them. For as things ſtand, they *muſt* refrain in a great many Inſtances,

Inſtances, or it will go very badly with them; and if they would fairly balance their Gains and their Loſſes by vicious Indulgences, and when they have done all that in common Prudence is neceſſary to be done for their own Sakes (Regard being had to Health, to their Circumſtances, and the *Laws* of Civil Society) would ſit down and conſider, how little there will remain to be done for God's Sake, perhaps they would be better reconciled to Religion, and not think it worth the while to hazard an *Eternity* for ſuch a Trifle.

Thus far then we have gone in preparing the Way to the grand Queſtion that is to follow, concerning the Equity of the *Sanction* of *Chriſt's* Law, *viz.* to have ſhewn that the *Law* in *itſelf* is *equitable*, laying no greater Reſtraint upon us than what the natural Law ſubjects us to, nor more than in many Caſes we ſhall find ourſelves obliged to lay upon ourſelves, whether we have Religion or whether we have none. This Point goes no farther than to the *Matter* of the Law. But Laws (as I have obſerved) may be conſidered as to the *Circum-*

Circumſtances under which they are given, which, to make ſuch Laws truly equitable, ought to be adjuſted by Wiſdom and Goodneſs. To explain my Meaning: A Law will be more or leſs equitable, as the *Encouragement* which it offers to influence the Obedience of the Subject, or the *Helps*, and *Aſſiſtances* it adminiſters, to guard againſt Tranſgreſſions (View being had to the Strength or Weakneſs of thoſe upon whom it is impoſed) are greater or leſs. And that the Proviſions made by the Goſpel in theſe reſpects are amply ſufficient, St. *Peter* ſeems to intimate to us, in his ſecond Epiſtle, Chap. i. ℣ 3, 4. where he ſays, that God *hath given us all things that pertain to Life and Godlineſs, through the Knowledge of him that hath called us to Glory and Virtue. Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, that by theſe we might be Partakers of the divine Nature, having eſcaped the Corruption that is in the World through Luſt.* God calls us to *Virtue* by the Goſpel, but he calls us likewiſe to *Glory* as the Reward of Virtue. He calls us from *the Corruption that is in the World through Luſt*, to be *Partakers of the divine*

Nature; but he has *given to us exceeding great and precious Promiſes*, to ſtrengthen and ſupport us in this difficult Work. And theſe are the things we are now to conſider.

Of the Equity of the Law of Chriſt, in reſpect of the Reward *it propoſes.*

And, in the firſt place, as to the REWARD; it has been laid down from the Beginning, that the Goſpel is itſelf the Charter of ETERNAL LIFE to them that obey it; and no Man can pretend to object, that this is not a ſufficient Encouragement. For though the Law of *Chriſt* obliges us to renounce this World, and to follow Him, if Need requires, through Afflictions and Perſecutions, and even unto Death itſelf; yet, under the very worſt Circumſtances that can be put, St. *Paul's Reckoning* will be right, *That the Sufferings of this preſent Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed in us.* Becauſe *our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*, Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 17. If the Life to come comprehends an Eternity of Happineſs, it will repay all our

our Sufferings in this short and momentary State with infinite Advantage: And this should help to reconcile us to the Severity of the Gospel Sanction, that the Reward is also proportionable.

But the Objection here is, not that the Gospel does too little, but that it does too much. Some Unbelievers will tell us, that Virtue must be a *disinterested* Thing; and that to obey God in view of Benefit or Advantage to ourselves, is mean and selfish. This Notion (you will observe) places the Gospel under the absurd Light of destroying, by the means which it appointeth, the very End which it proposeth; for that the Rewards of a future State are set before us as a Motive to well-doing, is too plain from Scripture to admit of a Dispute. The Words of St. *Peter*, just now recited, are Evidence to this Point. For he places our being *called to Glory* in the Rank of a Means to Virtue; and says, that God hath given us *great and precious Promises*. THAT BY THESE (*i. e.* that by the *Force* and *Influence* of these) we might *escape the Corruptions of the World*, &c. But

St. *Paul* is clear and expreſs, *Tit.* ii. 13. where, after having ſet forth, that the End of *Chriſt's* coming was to *teach us to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World*, he immediately ſubjoins, LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE, *and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* And in his *ſecond* Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, Chap. iv. ver. 18. having mentioned the Courage and Diligence with which he had preached the Goſpel, he aſſigns the Reaſon of it in theſe Words, *While* WE LOOK *not at the things that are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen.* And this, he tells us, was the Caſe of ALL, in former times, who ſtand recorded as Examples of patient Suffering for Virtue's Sake; *They* HAD RESPECT *to the* RECOMPENCE *of the Reward.* They SAW THE PROMISES *afar off*, and took all things patiently, THAT THEY MIGHT OBTAIN *a better Reſurrection*, Heb. xi. 26. 13. 35.

We ſee from theſe Paſſages, that the Scripture, far from conſidering the being influenced

influenced by future Hopes, as a Diſparagement to the Virtue of a Man, repreſents it as its proper and natural Support. And if the Notion of *Virtue* and *Religion* would not admit of this Support, the Conſequence muſt be, that the Goſpel, inſtead of bringing *Life and Immortality to Light*, ſhould have left it under its natural Obſcurity. We muſt ſee then which are in the right, *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, or theſe Philoſophers. And in order to it, I advance this general Principle as a Maxim of common Senſe, That as Virtue, in the Idea of it, refers itſelf to *Law* and *Authority*; ſo all Authority, whether human or divine, is founded in the Suppoſition of *Benefit* or *Advantage*, either already received, or hereafter expected, by thoſe who are the Subjects of ſuch Authority. Mere *Power* creates no *Authority*. If it did, it would follow, that where there is Power, there is alſo Authority; and this would eſtabliſh an univerſal Tyranny. But Power muſt be attended with ſome *beneficial Influence*, to make it a proper Foundation for Law and Government, as we ſee it is in every kind of Government that we know any thing of. Whence ariſeth the *parental* Au-

thority but from thoſe Benefits which, by the Order of Nature, Parents are made the Inſtruments of conveying to their Children? Or whence the Authority of *States* and *Kingdoms*, but from the beneficial Influences of Society, in reſpect of what is moſt dear and valuable to us, our Lives and our Properties? Strip human Governments of this Circumſtance, and they will be mere *Deſpotiſm*; and ſo will the Government of God be, if you ſhould diveſt him of his Character, of being the common Parent and Benefactor to Mankind; upon which Character *Paul* and *Barnabas* rightly place that Homage which we are to pay him, *Acts* xiv. 15. 17. where, having preached to the People of *Antioch*, that they ſhould *turn from their Vanities unto the* living God, they ſupport their Advice by this Argument, that HE indeed was their Benefactor, and not thoſe IDOLS whom they vainly worſhipped as Benefactors. GOD *which made the Heaven and Earth, and the Sea and all things that are therein—left not himſelf* [at any time] *without Witneſs* [that HE is to be worſhipped] *in that he* DID GOOD, *and gave us Rain from Heaven and fruitful*

fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs. God challenges our Obedience, as he is our Creator and Preſerver. *In him we live and move and have our Being*, ſays St. *Paul* to the *Athenians*, *Acts* xvii. 28. But it is ſuppoſed that our Creation is a *Benefit* to us; for had God created us not to Happineſs but to *Miſery*, he could have challenged no Obedience from us; a Notion ſo deeply rooted in the univerſal Senſe of Mankind, that the ancient heathen *Polytheiſm* was founded entirely upon it; for thoſe falſe Gods were always worſhipped under the Character of BENEFACTORS.

It will appear (I think) from theſe Conſiderations, that the abſolute *Diſintereſtedneſs* of Virtue is a mere Fiction; and that thoſe who place Religion upon this Bottom, however ſeemingly they may make it a Compliment, in reality ſap the very Foundation upon which it ſtands. For if *Law* and *Authority* are not diſintereſted things, (as has been proved) it will follow, that neither can *Virtue* (which hath *Reference* to *Law* or *Authority)* be a diſintereſted thing.

Virtue, is Obedience to God as the ſupreme Legiſlator. The Authority of God therefore muſt firſt be eſtabliſhed before you can exerciſe Virtue; for to treat that as Authority which is not Authority, is abſurd. But you cannot eſtabliſh the Authority of God without conſidering him as your Benefactor, nor can you therefore exerciſe Virtue without a View to Benefit; and whether the Benefit is already received or lies in Proſpect, it makes no Difference ſo long as Benefit is admitted as the Foundation of your Conduct. A Benefit received is a Reward in Hand.

It is not then *ſimply* a Regard to our own Benefit or Advantage, that diſparages our Conduct, and deſtroys Virtue; but it may indeed, and will be, deſtroyed by *wrong Motives*, and attending to ſlender Advantages, when our Thoughts ought to be directed to higher things. This is frequently the Caſe in human Life, and from ſome Inſtances of this Kind (ill applied) I ſuppoſe that the Objection may have taken its Riſe. If a Man gives a Sum of Money to relieve the Poor, not with a benevolent Mind,

Mind, but out of Vanity and Oſtentation; or if he does his Neighbour a good Turn, with no other View than the ſecuring as good or a better to be done to himſelf; the one is not Charity, the other is not Friendſhip, and neither of them is Virtue. And is not the Reaſon plain? The Caſes ſuppoſe the Thing not done which Virtue directs ſhould be done. For the Law of Charity or Friendſhip is, not to do an Act ſimply beneficial to another, but to do it with a benevolent Mind. It is the ſame thing if, in any other Inſtance, a Man does the external Act which the Law preſcribes, not out of reſpect to the Authority which commands it, but conſidering it as an Inſtrument uſeful to ſome temporal Advantage. But the Fault in this ſort of Conduct lies not in this, that a Man acts by Motives of Benefit to himſelf; but in this, that he acts by Motives of his own chuſing, againſt the Spirit and Intention of the Law; which, as it implies a Preference of leſſer Advantages to greater, is Folly, and as it carries with it a Neglect of the Authority of the ſupreme Legiſlator, is Iniquity into the Bargain. But ſurely there can be nothing

wrong

wrong in attending to thoſe Motives which the Law itſelf propoſes; or if there be, it falls equally upon the Legiſlator. For if it is inconſiſtent with the Virtue of a Man to look for a Reward, it muſt be as inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of God to offer one; and this is the Point that the Objection drives at. But vain is the Attempt, unleſs it can be ſhewn, that Authority cannot be reaſonably exerciſed or ſubmitted to, if any body is to be the better for it; which is a Contradiction to common Senſe, and deſtroys (as has been ſhewn) all Law and Government in the World.

The Truth of the Caſe then ſeems to be this; that in reſpect of all Advantages that offer a Diſparagement to the Law, Virtue is, and muſt be, a diſintereſted thing; for what diſgraces the Law, muſt alſo be a Diſgrace to the human Conduct. And of this kind are all the Advantages of this World, when they come to ſtand in Competition with the Rewards of a Life to come. I do not think that temporal Advantages, merely as ſuch, are an improper Foundation for Religion. For the *Jews* were under a Covenant

venant with God, eſtabliſhed upon the Foot of temporal Promiſes ; and the Obedience which they paid in view of theſe Promiſes, was undoubtedly a reaſonable Service, as it was Obedience paid upon Motives propoſed by the Legiſlator himſelf. But if, inſtead of attending to theſe Promiſes, and waiting for the Accompliſhment of them from the Hand of Providence, they ſhould any of them have ſet up Motives of their own, and acted upon the Views of preſent Intereſt, or Ambition, or Vain-glory (of which Sort of Conduct the *Phariſees* were remarkably guilty) this would have been placing their Obedience upon a wrong Bottom, and would have deſtroyed its Value in the Sight of God. And this muſt ever be the Caſe under every Religious Diſpenſation, where the Law is externally complied with, but without Attention to the Authority of God, and the Promiſes upon which the Law is eſtabliſhed. But to lay it down univerſally, that in ſerving God a Man ought abſolutely to diveſt himſelf of all Regard to his own Happineſs, is a very great Abſurdity. I can think of no other Reaſon worthy of God

God why he ſent us into Being, than this, that he might communicate to us of his Happineſs. If then Happineſs is God's End in reſpect to Man, it muſt be Man's End in reſpect to himſelf and his own own Conduct; and he that thinks he can ſhew a better, reproaches infinite Wiſdom as acting unwiſely.

Upon this Principle, I cannot help thinking, that it is ſo far from being an Objection to the Goſpel, that it propoſes a Reward to well-doing, that it would have been an Objection to it (not to be anſwered) if it had propoſed none. For a Syſtem that propoſes Virtue as its End, ought to adminiſter the Means that are neceſſary to ſupport Virtue, of which a Reward to well-doing is the firſt and chief. St. *Paul* ſeems to have been of this Opinion, *Heb.* xi. 6. where he ſays, *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a* REWARDER *of them that diligently ſeek him*; which is telling us in effect, that you may as reaſonably expect Religion in one that denies the Being of a God, as in one that denies his Providence in rewarding Virtue.

And

And the thing is plain ; for though the Ideas of Right and Wrong are as diſtinct from each other, as the Ideas of Number, Magnitude, or Proportion (in all the Varieties of them) are diſtinct ; yet I know of no Being that is qualified to maintain a regular, uniform Conduct merely upon the Strength of ſuch Ideas, excepting the one ſupreme Being ; and the Reaſon why HE is ſo qualified is, becauſe he has in himſelf Happineſs eſſentially full and complete. The Mind of Man neceſſarily feels its own Happineſs, or the Want of it ; and by the ſame Neceſſity by which it taſtes and enjoys the preſent Good, it covets that which is to come ; and it is altogether as impoſſible, that God ſhould eſtabliſh a Syſtem of moral Government, in oppoſition to this Principle, as that he ſhould have eſtabliſhed the material Syſtem upon Laws which interfere with the eſſential Properties of material Subſtances. What *Gravitation* is in the natural World, that the *Propenſity* of the Soul to its own Good is in the moral World ; and as the Deſtruction of the one would infer a Diſſolution of the whole material Syſtem, the Deſtruction of the other would

would be attended with a like Effect in the moral. It is neceſſary therefore that (in the final Iſſue of things) Obedience to the Law of God ſhould coincide with human Happineſs, that is, that there ſhould be a Reward to Virtue, and this in Proportion to the Perfection of our moral State. This Notion places God and Man each in their proper Light: God as ruling the World with Juſtice, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs; and Man as purſuing his natural End, and finding it in his Obedience to the Will of his Creator. But if the Law of God ſhould direct one Way, and the ſupreme Happineſs of Man lye another, there could be no Conſiſtency in the Human Conduct, nor Harmony in the Government of God. Man muſt either forſake his natural End, which is one Abſurdity; or he muſt renounce all Allegiance to his Maker, which is another Abſurdity; and God would demand as due from Man, what Man, if he has any Regard to himſelf (which in the Nature of things is and muſt be the cloſeſt Intereſt) can never pay.

That

That the SUMMUM BONUM, or SOVEREIGN GOOD of Man, is the ſupreme Rule of human Conduct; is the univerſal Senſe of Mankind. The ancient Philoſophers all agreed in this; but the Difficulty was where to find it. They who placed it in carnal Pleaſure, deſtroyed all Religion of courſe; and they who placed it in Virtue (where, no doubt, it ought to be placed) found it difficult to explain themſelves ſo as to make their Notions agree with Fact and Experience. It is indeed impoſſible to find Man's ſupreme Good in Virtue, if you carry your Thoughts no farther than to the preſent State of things. For we find not that Concurrence, or Coincidence of Virtue with Happineſs, that is neceſſary to make it our ſupreme Good. And hence it is, that the common natural Argument for a future State takes its Riſe. For Reaſon not ſeeing a Reward for Virtue in this World, expects in another; and this accounts (and alone can account) for the Inequalities that appear in God's Government in reſpect of the Diſtribution of Good and Evil. But what natural Light gathers by

Deduction and Conſequence, the Goſpel expreſly ſtipulates; and had not *Chriſt* left it a very clear Point, that there was a Reward in Store, he would have had little Cauſe to expect, that thoſe whom he called to be his Diſciples, ſhould *forſake all* to follow him. The Diſciples of *Chriſt* tell him as much, *Matt.* xix. 27. where *Peter* ſays, for himſelf and for all the reſt, *Behold! we have forſaken all and followed thee*; WHAT SHALL WE HAVE THEREFORE? Something, you ſee, they expected in the way of Recompence, that ſhould make it worth their Pains. And our Saviour in his Anſwer, at ver. 29. confeſſes the Reaſonableneſs of this Expectation. *Every one that hath forſaken Houſes, or Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my Name's ſake, ſhall inherit eternal Life.*

There is, indeed, one Paſſage of our Saviour which may ſeem to look another way; and that is *Luke* xvii. 9, 10. where he tells his Diſciples, that *when* they ſhould *have done all thoſe Things which* were *commanded* them, they would deſerve *no Thanks*;

Thanks; that they would be *unprofitable Servants*, as having *done* no more than *that which was* their *Duty to do.* This, I ſay, may ſeem to import, that a Diſciple of *Chriſt* is in all Caſes, and under every Circumſtance that may be put, bound to obey his Laws, though he ſhould not have propoſed a Reward to well doing; for he that propoſes a Reward offers ſomething more than Thanks. But this, certainly, was not our Saviour's Meaning. For it is to be obſerved, that he ſpeaks to his Diſciples as under the Relation of *Servants.* Such they are ſtyled in the Text; and the Compariſon by which this Paſſage is introduced, places them in that Light. *Which of you, having a* SERVANT *plowing or feeding Cattle, will ſay unto him by and by when he is come from the Field, Go and ſit down to Meat? And will not rather ſay unto him, Make ready wherewith I may ſup, and gird thyſelf and ſerve me till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou ſhalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that Servant becauſe he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not, ſo likewiſe* YE, &c. Let me now aſk, What is the Reaſon why a com-

mon Servant deſerves *no Thanks* for doing his Maſter's Work? Is it not becauſe the Maſter pays him Wages? Undoubtedly; for if he paid him none, he would have Cauſe more than enough to be thankful. In the Compariſon therefore it is plain, that the Wages are preſuppoſed, and ſo they are in the Application; that is, the Diſciples of *Chriſt*, conſidered as his *Servants*, muſt be underſtood as entitled to Wages; and ſo our Saviour tells them they *were*, in another Place; *And he that* REAPETH *receiveth* WAGES, *and gathereth Fruit unto Life eternal*, John iv. 36. This was the Wages which *Chriſt* had aſſigned his Servants from the Beginning; and this conſidered, he owed them *no Thanks*; he became not their Debtor, by any thing they could do in Obedience to his Will at *preſent*, becauſe the Wages which they were to receive would be an ample Compenſation. Let us now ſee the Pertinency of this Remark to the Matter in hand when our Saviour made it.

We read at the 5th Verſe, that *the Apoſtles ſaid unto the Lord, Increaſe our Faith.* What

What are we to underſtand to have been the Drift of this Petition? Our Saviour, in his Anſwer at the next Verſe, ſeems plainly enough to intimate, how HE underſtood it. *If ye had Faith as a Grain of Muſtard Seed, ye might ſay unto this Sycamine Tree, Be thou plucked up, and be thou planted in the Sea; and it ſhould obey you.* The Faith which the Apoſtles wanted, was Faith for the Purpoſe of working Miracles; for why did our Saviour mention this Effect of Faith, but becauſe he ſaw it to be uppermoſt in their Thoughts? The Apoſtles did many Miracles; but their Power as yet was limited, as appears from *Matt.* xvii. 14, *&c.* where our Saviour cured a Lunatick whom his Diſciples could not cure. And when they aſked him, privately, why they could not, he told them, it was *becauſe of their Unbelief*, adding theſe Words (which are parallel to thoſe in the Paſſage under Conſideration) *Verily I ſay unto you, If ye have Faith as a Grain of Muſtard Seed, ye ſhall ſay unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder Place; and it ſhall remove, and nothing ſhall be impoſſible to you.* Finding then in themſelves this Defect, and being unwil-

ling in this reſpect to appear inferior to their Maſter, they apply to him for the *Increaſe* of their *Faith*. But what ſays our Saviour? Why, after having acknowledged the Power of Faith, he plainly excepts againſt their Propoſal; and ſhews them, in the Compariſon of a common Maſter and Servant, that they aſked what was improper. There would be a Time when they ſhould have what they deſired, as there is a Time for Servants to eat and drink as well as for the Maſter. But as Servants do not eat and drink till the Maſter is firſt ſerved, ſo neither were they to have the Faith they aſked for till his Work was finiſhed; and then they ſhould have it, as he told them plainly, afterwards; *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, He that believeth in me, the Works that I do ſhall he do alſo— becauſe I go unto the Father*, John xiv. 12. which imports, that this Plenitude of Power, of which the Apoſtles were now ſo deſirous, was not to be granted them till he ſhould *go unto the Father*, that is, till after his Reſurrection, when *all Power* ſhould be *given unto* him, *both in Heaven and Earth* (Matt. xxviii. 18.) and he would ſend

ſend them forth under the Aids of the Holy Ghoſt, as he himſelf *was ſent of the Father*, John xx. 21. And to ſilence all Murmurings and Complainings at this Refuſal of their Requeſt, he gives them to underſtand, that in their Submiſſion to his Will in this reſpect, he required no more of them than what every Maſter expects from his Servants, who, as ſuch, are bound to a like Obedience, and are in this Senſe *unprofitable* to their Maſter, as he is not *beholden* to them; as they do no more for him than by the Relation in which he ſtands, he is *entitled* to require.

We ſee then, upon the whole, how little this Paſſage of Scripture has to do with the Notion I have been confuting, the *abſolute Diſintereſtedneſs* of Virtue. If the Apoſtles had aſked a Reward for their Services, and our Saviour had given the ſame Anſwer, it would have been to the Purpoſe. But they aſk no ſuch thing (as there was no need to aſk what had been already promiſed them) but, the Reward ſuppoſed, they aſk the Increaſe of their Faith, thinking their preſent State in this reſpect to have

been defective. If they had aſked the Increaſe of Wealth, the Increaſe of Honour, or any other Thing relative to their Condition in this World, the Anſwer would have been equally proper, which bears this general Senſe, that we have no Pretence to challenge or complain of God on the account of any Diſadvantages, ſeeming or real, which we may lie under in reſpect of our preſent Circumſtances, conſidering that we are ſerving a Maſter, to whom the very beſt Services we can do, muſt fall greatly ſhort of the Wages he has aſſigned us.

I thought it might be of uſe to explain this difficult Paſſage of Scripture, and to ſhew, that in reſpect of the Argument under Conſideration, the Goſpel is throughout uniform, and conſiſtent with itſelf.

Of the Equity of the Law of Chriſt, in reſpect of the Helps *it adminiſters.*

From the REWARD then let us proceed to that other Point in which (as I have ſaid) the *Equity* of the Law of *Chriſt* is concerned, *viz.* the *Helps* and *Aſſiſtances* adminiſtered by the Goſpel to guard againſt Tranſgreſſion, view being had

had to our Strength or Weakneſs. This Subject neceſſarily leads us to conſider the natural *State* of Man, which is thus ſet forth by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* vii. 21—23. *I find a Law, that when I would do good, Evil is preſent with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward Man: But I ſee another Law in my Members, warring againſt the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members.* And again, *Gal.* v. 17. *The Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other.*

What Change the Nature of Man ſuffered by the Fall, is neither eaſy nor neceſſary to be explained. What the Apoſtle here ſays, is what we all experience, *viz.* that there is a perpetual Struggle between the Fleſh and the Spirit; Reaſon directing to one Way of acting, and Appetite ſoliciting another Way. And in this the Goſpel has nothing ſpecially to do; for the natural State of Man will be juſt what it is, whether you admit Revelation, or whether you admit it not. I am not therefore concerned

ſhew Reaſons, why Mankind is placed in ſuch a State, or to anſwer the Objections of thoſe who think it hard to be reconciled to our Notions of the Juſtice, Wiſdom, or Goodneſs of God, that he hath left our Way to Happineſs beſet with ſo much Difficulty and Danger; for theſe Objections lie as full againſt God's general Providence, as againſt his particular Providence as manifeſted by the Goſpel Revelation. But there is one thing for which Revelation is anſwerable, becauſe natural Reaſon ſays nothing about it, and that is the Agency of *evil Spirits*, who, as the Scripture repreſents the Caſe, are perpetually conſpiring with natural Appetite, to entice us from our Allegiance to God, and draw us into Sin. We have ſeen before, that the Devil tempted our firſt Parents; and it is the ſame *Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Diſobedience*, as St. *Paul* tells us, *Eph.* ii. 2. Our Saviour himſelf ſaid to the unbelieving *Jews*, *Ye are of your Father the Devil; and the Luſts of your Father ye will do*, John viii. 44. And upon this Principle, that the Devil is the Author and Promoter of Sin, St. *Paul* ſays to the *Corinthians*, *I*

am

am jealous over you with a godly Jealousy— lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his Subtilty, so your Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. That is, that the Devil should seduce you as he seduced our first Parents. St. *Peter* bids us *be sober* and *vigilant, because our Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Epist. v. 8. And though St. *James* tells us (Chap. i. ver. 14.) that *every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed*; yet, in his account, Sin is of the Devil also; for he bids us to *resist the Devil*, Chap. iv. ver. 7. and speaking of a bad Tongue, he saith, *It is set on Fire of* HELL, that is, by the Instigation of those evil Spirits who come forth from Hell, the Habitation appointed for them, Chap. iii. ver. 6. It would be useless to add more Proofs in so clear a Case.

This Part of the Christian Doctrine Unbelievers are wont to treat with Ridicule; and, in Truth, it is all they have for it. For to shew by Reason and Argument that there

there are no ſuch Beings, or that they have no ſuch Intercourſe with the human Race, as the Scripture repreſents them to have, is utterly impoſſible. I know of no Reaſon why any one ſhould deny the Exiſtence of Spirits evil or good, but this, that they do not fall within the Notice of our Senſes. But this can be no Proof, unleſs it were true, that nothing *is* or *can be* which Senſe doth not perceive; which Principle infers the Denial of a God, and is confuted by every Day's Experience. Nor is it at all difficult to underſtand, that Spirits by their Agency may influence the Mind towards Good or Evil; by exciting good or evil Thoughts; by raiſing or by abating the Force of natural Appetite. We know that many natural Subſtances have this Virtue. Give a Man Opium, and it will lay him aſleep. Intoxicate him with Wine, and it will make him fooliſh or mad. One Diſpoſition of the Body makes us gay and chearful; another inclines to Seriouſneſs or Melancholy. And why may not inviſible Spirits have the ſame Power, either by acting upon the corporeal Inſtrument, or upon the Mind immediately as material Subſtances

ſtances do? As to the moral Fitneſs of the thing, that God ſhould ſuffer us thus to be tempted; if you can reconcile the general Notion of God's permitting us to be tempted with his Wiſdom and Goodneſs (for which, as I have ſaid juſt now, Natural Religion is to anſwer, as much as Revealed) you may eaſily account for his permitting this particular Species of Temptation. For whether a Man is tempted merely by the Motions of his own Luſts, or by the Inſtrumentality of evil Men, or evil Spirits, it makes no Difference, provided the Temptation does not exceed the Meaſure of our Strength to reſiſt it. And this is the Caſe. For St. *James* tells us, in the Paſſage above cited, that if we *reſiſt the Devil, he will flee from* us: And St. *Paul*, that *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer* us *to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the Temptation alſo make a Way to eſcape, that* we *may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13.

This then being the natural State of Man, that we are under perpetual Temptations, from the Motions of natural Appetite, and the Solicitations of the Devil and his Inſtruments; let us now conſider what Helps the

the Goſpel provides to ſtrengthen and ſupport us under them. The firſt of theſe is the Promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt; *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever*, John xiv. 16. And St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the whole Body of faithful Chriſtians, ſays, they are *a holy Temple in the Lord, an Habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 21,22. And in many other Places of Scripture, Chriſtians are repreſented as the *Temple of God*, or, *the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt*, which *dwelleth* in them; which kind of Expreſſions denote a ſpecial Preſence of the Holy Ghoſt in the Hearts of good Men, to be their Support and Comforter. There is great Propriety in this, that as Nature leaves us under the Empire of the wicked One, Grace ſhould conſign us to the Protection of God's holy Spirit. And it is a full Anſwer to the Objection that God ſuffers the Devil to tempt us, that he, by his own Preſence, will guard us againſt his Temptations, and enable us to *tread* him *under our Feet*, Rom. xvi. 20. And what can an Unbeliever have to ſay againſt this Doctrine but this, that we ourſelves feel not the Operations of the holy Spirit,

Spirit, ſo as to be able to diſtinguiſh them from the natural Operations of our Minds? It is true; we feel not the Operations of the Spirit, whether good or evil; but this does not prove that there are no ſuch Operations. The Body grows or decays; attains a healthy or a ſickly Conſtitution, by the Operations of natural Cauſes; and yet we feel not theſe Operations within ourſelves, nor know any thing of them but by their Effects. And why may not the Spirit work in the ſame imperceptible Manner that natural Cauſes do? It is ſuppoſed in this Account, that the Spirit operates in ſuch a Manner as is perfectly conſiſtent with the natural Liberty of Man; that is, ſo as not to offer any Violence to the Will (which would be to deſtroy the very Notion of moral Agency) but only to move or incline it. And this agrees with what the Scripture ſays; for as the *Devil* may be *reſiſted*, ſo may *the Holy Ghoſt*, Acts vii. 51. And therefore St. *Paul*, though he tells us, that *it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do*; yet exhorts us at the ſame time to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, Philip. ii. 12, 13.

In

In the next place we may and ought to reckon among the *Helps* and *Aſſiſtances* to Virtue, the *Inſtitutions* and *Ordinances* of the Goſpel; by which the Diſciples of *Chriſt* are held together as one viſible Society, under the publick Profeſſion of his Faith, and a joint Communion in the Diſpenſations of his Word and Sacraments. Unbelievers are wont to complain of theſe as arbitrary Laws; and arbitrary they are in this Senſe, that their whole Force and Virtue, as Laws, depends upon the Will of the Lawgiver. But if they would have us to underſtand, that they are Impoſitions of mere Will, without regard to Uſe or Propriety in reſpect of the Perſons upon whom they are impoſed; St. *Paul* inſtructs them better, *Eph.* iv. 11, *&c.* where ſpeaking of *Chriſt's* conſtituting a viſible Church, and that he *gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts*, &c. he tells us, it was *for the perfecting the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt, till we all come, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt*; that is (as the Apoſtle preſently

preſently explains himſelf) that we may not *walk in the Vanity of our Minds*; that we may *put off the old Man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful Luſts*, and being *renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, put on the new Man, which, after God, is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*. It is true, that all *poſitive* Laws are a Reſtraint upon natural Liberty: And who will pretend to ſay, that God hath not a Right to do that which Civil Authority does every Day? Wiſe Magiſtrates will not impoſe Laws wantonly; but for Ends ſubſervient to the publick Good: And it is for publick Benefit that God hath appointed the Goſpel Ordinances, to wit, that being eſtabliſhed in the Faith of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, we may attain to that Sobriety, Righteouſneſs, and Godlineſs, to which our Faith engages us. And moſt true it is, that he who religiouſly and conſcientiouſly obſerves the Law of *Chriſt*, in theſe reſpects; by commemorating him frequently in partaking of the Sacrament of his Body and Blood; by giving due Attendance to Prayer, to Meditation, and to the hearing and reading his Word; lives in a State of perpetual Diſcipline, by which

Conſcience is always kept awake to reproach and condemn him when he doth evil, and to put him upon that vigorous Oppoſition to Fleſh and Blood, which is neceſſary to carry us through the Temptations of the World, which never can prevail but when Conſcience ſleeps, and thoſe Conſiderations which ſhould ſupport our Virtues, grow faint and languid upon the Mind.

This Principle, that the Ordinances of the Goſpel ſtand in the rank of Means and Helps to Virtue, ought carefully to be attended to; becauſe if it were ſo, that they were intended to ſerve us inſtead of Virtue, or were held in more account than a good Life, they were very juſtly to be condemned. But though Unbelievers are very apt to repreſent them in this Light, and careleſs or partial Chriſtians may miſtake their true Meaning; the Goſpel itſelf is perfectly clear in this reſpect. We know with what Severity *Chriſt* reprehends the *Jews* for laying more Streſs upon the external Appointments of their Law than was fit and reaſonable, *Matt.* xxiii. 23. *Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, for you pay Tythe of Mint, and Aniſe, and Cummin, and have omitted the* WEIGHTIER MATTERS

TERS *of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith.* We ſee here that moral Duties have the Preference given them to Matters of ſimple Inſtitution; and that the doing one, whilſt the other were neglected, availed nothing, but to their greater Condemnation. And this was true, not only in reſpect of theſe leſſer things, the *tything Mint, and Aniſe, and Cummin*, but alſo in reſpect of thoſe which were of the higheſt Account, their *Sacrifices* (*i. e.* in reſpect of their whole Ritual Law put together) as their Prophets had often [1] warned them. Agreeably to this Notion, that moral Duties are the *weightier Matters* of the Law, our Saviour decides (and the Prophets before him had decided) that in Caſes where both kinds of Duties cannot ſtand together, poſitive Appointments muſt give way to moral Duties, and not moral Duties to them. *Go* ye (ſays he to the *Jews) and learn what this meaneth, I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*, Matt. ix. 13. and Chap. xii. 7. from *Hoſeah* vi. 5. It appears by the Caſes to which our Saviour applied theſe Words, that as the Word *Sacrifice* is here uſed to ex-

[1] *Iſaiah* i. 10—18. *Amos* v. 21, *&c.*

preſs not only Sacrifices and Oblations of all kinds, but alſo each Circumſtance and Article of Worſhip, with the ſeveral Obſervances appointed by the Law; ſo the Word *Mercy* takes in the whole Compaſs of moral Duties; and the Senſe of the Paſſage is, that where the Law cannot be obſerved in reſpect of both, the former muſt give way to the latter, as to the more worthy [m]. What was true under the Legal Diſpenſation, is as true under the Evangelical, for the Reaſon is the ſame in reſpect of both; and there can be no doubt, but that our Saviour, in ſhewing the *Jews* what Regard was due to the Appointments of *Moſes*, intended that his Diſciples ſhould learn in what Rank his own Inſtitutions ſtood. But if you want plain Proof, hear what St. *Paul* ſays of the Inſtitution of Baptiſm, *Rom.* vi. 4. *We are buried with him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life:* And of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, 29. *Let*

[m] See two excellent Diſcourſes on this Subject in Bp. *Weſton's* Sermons, Vol. I. Serm. 1, 2.

a Man

a Man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the Lord's Body.

Where now is the Fault? The Inſtitutions of *Chriſt* are ſubſervient to Virtue, in the way of Means and Inſtruments; but they ſuperſede no moral Duty; they ſtand in the way of none; for all the Duties of the Moral Law, whether they relate to Juſtice or Mercy, challenge the Precedence. It is true (as I have juſt now obſerved) they are a Reſtraint upon natural Liberty; and who ſhall preſume to ſay, that God has not a Right to reſtrain natural Liberty? Does not every Father or Maſter challenge this Right in his own Family; and every Magiſtrate in his own Kingdom? Is not this Right always exerciſed when Regulations are preſcribed in things in themſelves indifferent, to ſecure a a right Behaviour in other Matters, in which Authority and Government are eſſentially concerned? It is; and to diſpute the Reaſonableneſs of this kind of Proviſions, would be juſt as abſurd as if you ſhould

queſtion, whether when a Man hath plowed and ſown his Land, it is reaſonable for him to ſet Hedges or other Fences about it, to keep it from being trodden down. *Moſes's* Law was burthened with ſuch a Variety of external Rights, that St. *Peter*, in that great Queſtion, whether *Chriſt's* Diſciples were held to the Obſervance of it, calls it *a Yoke, which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear*, Acts xv. 10. And yet there can be no doubt, but that the Wiſdom of God may be juſtified, in laying on this Burden, if it was found neceſſary, in order to prevent a worſe Miſchief; upon the ſame Principle that the Wiſdom of a Phyſician will be juſtified in preſcribing a ſevere Regimen, when the Diſeaſe is ſtubborn, and will not yield to gentler Means. How little Cauſe then is there to find fault with the Inſtitutions of *Chriſt*, which can be a Burthen to none but to careleſs, unthinking Men, who look upon every thing as loſt that is not given up to the Vanities of Life, and by that very Diſpoſition ſhew, that they *want* what they *complain* of as a Grievance? It was to cure this Levity of Mind that theſe Ordinances were intended;

intended ; and no Man can ſay, that this is not a right Intention, who thinks Virtue and its Fruits to be a Benefit worth the owning. If you ſet any Value upon Life, you will not complain that you are put into a proper Way to reſtore a depraved Appetite, though the Remedy ſhould be ſomething diſguſtful. Nor, if you mean in good earneſt to be virtuous, ſhould you kick at theſe leſſer kind of Reſtraints, which only help to prepare you to bear the greater with leſs Reluctancy.

The many Superſtitions that have been engrafted upon the external Appointments of the Goſpel, and the Diviſions and Contentions that have ariſen in relation to them, in almoſt all Ages of the Church, are Topicks upon which the Enemies of Chriſtianity delight very much to enlarge. But ſuch Objections as theſe ſcarce deſerve a ſerious Anſwer ; for the Goſpel is nothing concerned with them. If theſe Appointments were in themſelves, or in their own Nature, calculated to ſerve to no good Purpoſes, their being liable to bad Uſes, would have been a Reaſon why they ſhould never

have been made. But it is childiſh to think, that God ſhould be tied up from making wholeſome and ſalutary Proviſions, becauſe weak or bad Men may pervert them to a wrong Uſe. That the Ordinances of the Goſpel are ſuch Proviſions, the Reaſons above-mentioned very plainly ſhew, and will yet farther appear, if it be conſidered, that the conſtituting a viſible Church upon the Foot of external Ordinances, and the Exerciſe of a publick Worſhip, was not only proper, but even neceſſary, to the Preſervation of the Chriſtian Faith in its eſſential Points, and carrying down the Profeſſion of it from its firſt Promulgation to ſucceeding Ages. Had it not been for this, it may very juſtly be preſumed, that ere this time Chriſtianity would generally have been loſt to the World. For though the Scriptures are a faithful Record of the Doctrines of *Chriſt*, it is principally by their publick Uſe in the Church (where they have been conſtantly read) that they have been preſerved from the Injuries of Time, and made a general Benefit. They might poſſibly have been preſerved, as other ancient Writings are, for the Entertainment of the curious

rious and inquisitive; but the Bulk of Mankind, for whose Use they were intended, would have been very little the better for them. In a word, no Religion ever yet subsisted without its external Appointments; nor is it reasonable to think that any Religion ever can: And which is the safer Method, that God should prescribe for himself in such Matters, or leave it to Man to prescribe for him, is a Question which can bear no Dispute with any who know what human Inventions have in all Ages done of this sort, to the Shame of common Sense, and the Disgrace of common Virtue and Morality.

Of the Sanction of the Law of Christ.

I have now gone through the previous Question concerning the Equity of the Law of *Christ*; and have proved, that as to the subject Matter of it, the Law is holy, just, and good; and in respect of the Reward it proposes, and the Helps and Assistances it administers, wisely adapted to the Exigencies of Mankind in this our fallen, corrupt Condition. To all which we must add (what needs only to be just mentioned)

the gracious, condeſcending Terms upon which we ſtand with God, that he is at all times ready to accept of repenting Sinners; by which he hath provided, that no Man can want the proper Encouragement to do well, and all who die in their Sins are left without Excuſe. So that there is plainly nothing on the part of the Law to hinder but that the Sanction may be juſt. We muſt then proceed to the Sanction itſelf, and enquire whether there be any thing in it that impeaches the Juſtice, Wiſdom, or Goodneſs of God. By the Sanction, I mean the Penalty to be inflicted upon the Tranſgreſſors of the Law; which the Scripture calls *Hell—everlaſting Fire—a Furnace of Fire—a Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimſtone, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Whether by theſe Expreſſions we are to underſtand, a *material, elementary* Fire, is a very fruitleſs Queſtion, and therefore I ſhall not enter into it. It is enough for us to know, that wicked Men ſhall be very miſerable in a future State; eternally miſerable. And this ſevere Penalty is declared, to ſhake Terror over the Heads of thoſe whom the Promiſes of God's Mercies

in

in *Christ* will not hold; as our Saviour intimates, *Matt.* x. 28. FEAR *not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul: But rather* FEAR HIM, *which is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell.*

A Question may here be moved, whether *Fear* be a proper Principle upon which to place moral Virtue. The Doubt arises from a Notion, to which already much has been said, *viz.* That Virtue must be a *disinterested* thing; and the Resolution which has been given in respect of *Rewards*, will as well serve in respect of *Punishment*. For if it is no Disparagement to the Virtues of a Man, that he does well in hopes of *receiving Good*; it can be no Disparagement, that he does well in order to the *avoiding Evil*, which is a *negative* Good. Fear, as well as Hope, may be directed to an improper Object, and when it is so directed it will destroy Virtue. As suppose one should fear Man more than God; and do that upon the Views of some *present* Mischief to be avoided, which he would not do, either for the Reasonableness of the thing itself, or upon the Force of those much greater Motives

Motives which Religion ſets before him. And this was certainly the Poet's Idea, in a Paſſage (which ſome have weakly applied to the preſent Queſtion) where, when he would deſcribe a bad Servant, he ſays,

Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore;
Tu nihil admittes in te, FORMIDINE POENÆ.
Hor. Ep. Lib. i. 16.

He is certainly a bad Servant, who avoids offending his Maſter only for fear of being beaten. Why? Why, becauſe the proper Object of Virtue is left out of the Queſtion. But if Fear be directed to the *ſupreme Being*, and becomes to us a Principle of Action, there is no Diſparagement either to God or to ourſelves. Not the firſt; becauſe it is a Confeſſion of his Juſtice, which is as truly a Perfection in God, as Mercy and Goodneſs are. Not the ſecond; becauſe we act upon a proper Motive; a Motive propoſed by the Legiſlator himſelf, which is doing Honour to his Authority. A right Conduct, then, founded upon the Fear of God (that is, upon the Dread of thoſe Puniſhments, which HE hath threatened to inflict upon Sinners) is *Virtue*, ſo far as it goes,

goes, though it is only the first Degree of it. The Scripture carries it no higher. *The Fear of the Lord is the* BEGINNING *of Wisdom*, Psalm cxi. 10. Prov. ix. 10. what Fear *begins*, that Hope *finishes*. But still the acting upon the Motive of *Fear* is acting upon a *right* Motive, otherwise it could not be the *Beginning* of Virtue.

But that to which Unbelievers bend their main Force is to shew, that the Punishments of a future State, as declared by the Gospel, are inconsistent with the Perfections of the Deity. Their Objections upon this Head therefore must be replied to. I set out upon this general Principle of Natural Religion, that God is not only the Maker but the Governor of the World; and consequently hath a Right to punish the Breakers of his Laws, so far as the Ends of his Government make it necessary or fit. To punish merely for punishing sake, or when no Use or Purpose of Government requires it, is unjust and cruel; but to punish when the Ends of Government require Punishment, is both just and necessary, or else Government is not to be justified. But God's Govern-

Government, we are ſure, may be juſtified. It is both right and fit that he ſhould govern us, becauſe he made us ; and we are certain, that his Government is wiſe and juſt, becauſe Wiſdom and Juſtice are the eſſential Perfections of his Nature. So far then, I ſay, as the Uſe of Puniſhment is neceſſary to ſupport this juſt and righteous Government, ſo far God has a Right to puniſh ; nor can his Goodneſs or Benevolence intervene to hinder. For abſolute, unlimited Benevolence, which makes no Diſtinction of Perſons, or Things, or Circumſtances, is not a *Perfection*, but a real *Weakneſs*, as we all know and confeſs in Matters which concern the human Conduct. The Goodneſs of God is in this Senſe *infinite*, that it knows no Bounds but what his Wiſdom preſcribes to it : But if God's Goodneſs is to be directed by his Wiſdom, it muſt be exerciſed in a Manner that will conſiſt with the Wiſdom of his Government, that is, in a Manner that will conſiſt with the Uſe of Puniſhment, ſo far as the Ends and Purpoſes of his Government require.

There

There is no queſtion to be made, but that the End of God's creating Man, was to make him happy. But he muſt be underſtood as propoſing this in a way ſuitable to the Nature of free Agents, and ſo as not to give up his natural Right of Government. It is neceſſary that God ſhould maintain his own Government, becauſe his Government provides for the univerſal Good of Mankind, who will all be happy if they will all follow the Path which his Wiſdom points out to them. But if Men will ſet up their own Wiſdom in oppoſition to his, and ſeek Happineſs in ways of their own chuſing; God has undoubtedly a Right to reſtrain this Licentiouſneſs, by any means that are neceſſary, and therefore by the Uſe of Puniſhment, if *that* is neceſſary. And in this caſe we muſt not ſay that God is not good, becauſe he makes his Creatures miſerable, who, by firſt making themſelves *wicked*, are become unfit Objects for the Exerciſe of his Goodneſs.

Theſe Principles in all human Governments ſtand unconteſted; and why will they

they not as well hold in reſpect of the Government of God? What Unbelievers are wont to ſay upon this Subject, turns, I think, upon this Diſtinction, that "God "being infinitely ſufficient in himſelf, can- "not upon his own account be affected, "whether his Laws be or be not obſerved." That "he cannot be made angry, provok- "ed, or grieved by the Conduct of us poor "Mortals, nor gain any Comfort or Satiſ- "faction from the Actions of his Crea- "tures." This was the Manner of the *Epicureans* of old, to ſet up an abſolute, lawleſs Indulgence, upon the infinite Perfections of the ſupreme Being. A weak, as well as wicked Attempt! For though it be true, that God cannot be *hurt* by the Actions of Men, as Men are *hurt* by the Actions of one another; a Queſtion ſtill remains, "Whether there is not *one Species* "of Conduct, ſuited to the End of God's "creating Man, which, by all proper and "neceſſary Means, he is concerned to ſe- "cure?" In the Senſe we are now ſpeaking, it is very certain that God was not *benefited* by creating us; yet hath he called us into Being. Why? Why, becauſe in his

his Wiſdom he thought it proper ſo to do. Now if God is juſtified in creating us, though he himſelf received no Benefit by creating us (which none but mere Atheiſts will deny) why may he not as well be juſtified in uſing the neceſſary Means to keep us ſteddy to the End for which he created us, though he is not *hurt* when we deviate from that End? It is (you ſay) nothing to God, whether Man obeys his Laws, or whether he obeys them not. It is as little to him, ſure, whether the Sun riſes or ſets; whether the Seaſons of the Year return in their natural Order; or whether any natural Cauſe produceth its natural Effect. God's Happineſs is concerned in none of theſe things; but his Wiſdom is thus concerned in all of them, that if it was fit for him to make a World to continue for a certain Period, it muſt be as fit, till ſuch Period is determined, to preſerve and maintain thoſe natural Powers, without which the whole Frame and Syſtem of things would ſuffer a Diſſolution. The Application is obvious. For Man alſo has a Part, and a principal Part, to fill, in the univerſal Syſtem; and when he affects to run out of his proper Sphere,

Sphere, it is alike becoming the Wiſdom of God to reſtrain him, not indeed by that kind of Force by which the material Syſtem is held together, but by ſuch Inducements, whether of Hope or Fear, as are conſiſtent with his Nature, conſidered as a free and rational Being.

The Argument, as it now ſtands, goes no farther than to ſhew, that, ſuppoſing the Uſe of Puniſhment neceſſary in the Government of God, he has a Right to inflict Puniſhment upon the Tranſgreſſors of his Laws. And that it is neceſſary, there can be no room to queſtion; becauſe Fact and Experience ſhew it to be neceſſary in human Government, which is a Part of God's univerſal Government. Magiſtrates rule by God's Appointment; and therefore Puniſhment lawfully inflicted by the Magiſtrate, is *the Wrath of God againſt evil Doers*, as St. *Paul* ſtates it, *Rom.* xiii. Beſides, God hath ſo conſtituted the human Nature, that in many reſpects Sin carries with it its own Puniſhment, in its *natural* Effects and Conſequences; which is Evidence that the Wiſdom of God ſaw it neceſſary to puniſh

Sin in *this* World. And if Sinners find their Puniſhment in this World, and will not be reformed, it is reaſonable to think that they will find it, more *certainly* find it, in the next; leſt Man ſhould triumph againſt his Maſter. There were (I confeſs) among the ancient Philoſophers, thoſe who argued ſtrongly, that good Men ſhall be happy in a future State, who yet ſeemed to deny, that bad ones will be [n] miſerable; and it may perhaps be thought, that God would make a ſufficient Diſtinction, if whilſt good Men meet with the Reward of their Virtues, the bad ones ſhould, after Death, have [o] *no Exiſtence.* But the leaſt that can be ſaid is, that we are not competent Judges what is, or is not *ſufficient* in

[n] Mors aut planè negligenda eſt, ſi omnino EXTINGUIT animum; aut etiam optanda, ſi aliquo eum deducit, ubi ſit futurus æternus. Atqui TERTIUM certè NIHIL inveniri poteſt. Quid igitur timeam, ſi aut NON MISER poſt mortem, aut BEATUS etiam futurus ſum? *Cic.* de Senect. 19.——Quomodo igitur aut cur mortem malum tibi videri dicis, quæ AUT BEATOS nos efficiet, AUT NON MISEROS ſenſu carentes. *Id.* Tuſc. Diſp. 1.

[o] Hoc ipſum eſt pœna graviſſima æterna Beatitudine in æternum privari, & æternum perire. *Wolzogen.* in Matt. xxv. 46.

this Caſe. For ought that any Man can ſhew to the contrary, it may *not* be ſufficient; and this is all that is neceſſary for us to ſay: For our Buſineſs at preſent is not to eſtabliſh the Doctrine of future Puniſhments upon natural Principles; but to guard it againſt Objections from natural Principles.

It may be ſaid then, in the way of Objection, that "Puniſhment ought to be intended either for *Correction* or *Example*, "and is therefore proper in this World, "where we are upon our Tryal, and have "the Opportunity of being influenced by "it in our Behaviour; not ſo in the next "World, when the State of Tryal will be "over, and every Man's Condition finally "determined." But to this the Anſwer is, that *to puniſh* is not the firſt and principal End of penal Laws; but the Intention is, by *declaring* the Penalty, to *prevent* the Tranſgreſſion. The Law had rather that Men ſhould not offend, than that they ſhould want Correction; rather that they ſhould make themſelves Examples of Obedience, than that they ſhould be made Examples

amples of Justice. But when the Offence is committed, and Punishment follows, the Law *then* becomes the Instrument of Correction and Example: But you see very plainly that this is but a secondary, accidental Effect, in which the Legislator's Right to declare the Penalty hath nothing to do: For this flows not from the Capacity of the Subject to repeat the Offence, or to be made an Example to others; but from the Right which the Legislator has to support his Authority in the first Instance. If then the original Right to declare a Penalty hath *essentially* no relation to Correction or Example; it will follow, that the Right of punishing can have no such relation to them neither. For a Right to declare a Penalty, involves in it a Right to execute, in case the Penalty is incurred; because otherwise, the Right to declare a Penalty, would be a Right to declare *against* Right, which is absurd. Upon this it is that the whole Force and Virtue of a penal Sanction rests. For if it were understood, that the Legislator has no Authority to execute what the Law declares; such Declara-

tion would, to all Intents and Purpoſes, be an abſolute Nullity.

It remains then, that if God foreſaw that the Puniſhments of this Life would not be ſufficient to lay ſuch a Reſtraint upon evil Doers, as would anſwer the wiſe Ends of his Providence; he had a Right to declare Puniſhment in a future State, and having declared it, a Right alſo to inflict it, even though there ſhould be no room either for Correction or for Example in a future State. But I think that the Objection goes a great deal too far, in ſuppoſing that there will be no Uſe of *Example* in the next World, of which we know ſo little. We know that the next World is a Place of Happineſs for good Men, and of Miſery to bad ones: But how the next World is circumſtanced in reſpect of other Beings, of which there may be a great Variety (ſome of them, perhaps, in a State of Tryal, as we now are) to whom the Juſtice of God, in puniſhing incorrigible Sinners, may ſerve as a profitable Example; of this, I ſay, we know nothing, any farther than that our Saviour ſeems to intimate, that at the general Judgment, both

both good and bad Men ſhall ſtand as Examples to the inviſible World. *Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before Men, him ſhall the Son of Man alſo confeſs before the Angels of God; but he that denieth me before Men, ſhall be denied before the Angels of God*, Luke xii. 8, 9.

But the great Stumbling Block is, that the Goſpel declares EVERLASTING Puniſhment to Sinners. I ſhall not enter into thoſe Doubts which have been raiſed by ſome Chriſtian Writers, whether the Duration of the State of future Puniſhments is deſcribed in Scripture in ſuch Terms as imply that it will be ſtrictly and abſolutely *without End*; but, taking the common Opinion (which leaves to the Objection its full Weight) for granted, ſhall conſider how this Point ſtands in the view of Reaſon. And here I muſt deſire you to take notice, that I do not undertake to ſhew, *a priori*, that the Juſtice of God *requires* him to puniſh Sinners eternally; but this, I ſay (and it is enough for me to ſay) that they who pretend that it will not *conſiſt* with God's

Juſtice to puniſh Sinners eternally, affirm what they can never prove. For how do they attempt it? Why, thus—"Puniſh-"ment ought to bear a juſt Proportion to "the Offence: But between a *temporary* "Offence and an *eternal* Puniſhment, there "is no Proportion." This is the common Language of Objectors; and to avoid aſking many Queſtions, I will ſuppoſe the Meaning to be this, that "it is "againſt natural Juſtice, and that equit-"able Proportion that ſhould be preſerved "between the Crime and the Puniſhment, "that Offences committed *in this tempo-"rary State*, and attended only with *tem-"porary Advantages*, ſhould be followed "by eternal Puniſhment." I readily admit to the Objectors, that in order to clear the Juſtice of God, it is neceſſary that there be a due Proportion between Crimes and Puniſhments, in this Senſe, that the greateſt Sinners ſhould, proportionably, be the greateſt Sufferers; and this Suppoſition will very well ſtand with the Doctrine under Conſideration. For ſuppoſing all bad Men upon a foot of Equality, in reſpect of the *Duration* of the *State* of Puniſhment, there

there may be yet that *Difference* in the *Degrees* of Puniſhment, as (for ought I can underſtand) will be ſufficient to eſtabliſh the Juſtice of God. But the Objectors ſeem to be of Opinion, that "the Want "of Proportion in this ſingle Point, *viz.* "the Duration of the State in which the "Offence is committed, and the Duration "of the State of Puniſhment, *alone* de-"ſtroys the Juſtice of ſuch Puniſhment;" which, I ſay, is that which they can never prove. If they inſiſt on the contrary, it will be incumbent upon them to give ſome reaſonable Account *where* this Proportion lies, which I take to be impoſſible; for *Proportion* excludes *Diſproportion*, as well as *no* Proportion. Suppoſe that inſtead of declaring *eternal* Puniſhment to Sinners, the Goſpel had declared the Puniſhment of a thouſand Years. Would this have pleaſed you? If you ſay, Yes; ſhew a Reaſon why you ſay it, which will not as well ſerve, ſuppoſing that inſtead of *one* thouſand Years of Puniſhment, the Goſpel had declared *two* or *three* thouſand, and ſo on. Or if you think *one* thouſand Years *too much*, ſhew a Reaſon which will not as

well hold in reſpect of any Period of *ſhorter* Duration. Tell me, then, if you pleaſe, where is the Difference between ſaying, that you cannot ſhew a Reaſon which ſhall limit the Duration of the State of future Puniſhments to any *given* Period of Time; and ſaying, that you cannot ſhew a Reaſon why it may not laſt *for ever*.

The Truth of the Caſe therefore is, that the mere *Duration* of the State of Puniſhment (whether longer or ſhorter) hath no eſſential Relation to the *juſt Diſtribution* of Puniſhment; or (which comes to the ſame thing) no Relation that we know any thing of. There can be no doubt, but that every Man's Puniſhment will be proportioned to his Crimes, as every Man's Reward will be proportioned to his Virtues, *i. e.* by the *Degrees* of Puniſhment; thus much Juſtice ſeems to require. But the *Duration* of the *State* of Puniſhment may be determinable by *other* Conſiderations, reſpecting God's univerſal Government, of which we are not competent Judges. The Duration of the State of Puniſhment in this World, we ſee plainly, is determined by ſuch Conſiderations,

derations. For the evil Conſequences of vicious Actions (which are almoſt numberleſs) are the natural Puniſhments of thoſe Actions, as I have obſerved; and whilſt thoſe are ſhort and momentary, theſe are often long and laſting. And in reſpect of human Adminiſtrations, a Man may do that in one Day or one Hour, for which he ſhall juſtly ſuffer his whole Life after. If you aſk a Reaſon for this, it is, that the Order and Conſtitution of Things, as eſtabliſhed by Providence, makes it neceſſary that it ſhould be ſo. And there ſeems to me to be no greater Difficulty in conceiving, that there may be Reaſons of Providence that will make it neceſſary or fit, that Puniſhment in a future State, for Sins committed in this ſhort Life, ſhould extend to the *whole State* of our *future* Exiſtence; than there is in apprehending, that Puniſhment in this Life, for Sins committed in a very ſmall Part of it, may extend to the *whole State* of our *preſent* Exiſtence. We are too apt (I ſuſpect) when we are ſpeculating upon this Subject, to conſider the human Race *alone*, as concerned in this Branch of God's providential Diſpenſa-

tions; to repreſent this preſent State of Being to ourſelves, as the firſt and principal End of our Creation, and the Puniſhments of the State which is to come, like Chains and Dungeons, contrived as mere Inſtruments of Diſcipline, for paſt Offences. In this View of the Caſe, it will be very hard to reconcile the Eternity of future Puniſhments to the Goodneſs or Juſtice of God. But it may as reaſonably be ſuppoſed (which I conceive to be the Truth of the Caſe) that the State of our future Exiſtence, though laſt in Order, was firſt in the Intention of Providence; that the next World is, properly, our Country, to which this Life is but a ſhort Paſſage, and ſerves only as a State of Preparation; and the future State itſelf (ſo far as the human Race is concerned in it) but a Part of one grand Syſtem, in which an almoſt infinite Number of other Beings (as I have hinted above) may be concerned. Is it not poſſible then to conceive, that this univerſal Syſtem, in all its Parts, may be ſettled upon unchangeable Laws, all of them wiſely adjuſted to the Perfection of the whole Syſtem taken together; and that the *Nature* of this Eſtabliſhment

bliſhment will not *admit* of more than *one* State of Tryal for the human Race, which ſhall determine every Man's Lot to endleſs Happineſs, or to endleſs Miſery? If it is poſſible to conceive that there *may* be ſuch an Eſtabliſhment as this (and who is able to prove that there *cannot!)* all Complaints againſt Providence, all Impeachments of the Goſpel on this Head of Accuſation, muſt ceaſe? For what will you ſay? Man has had fair Warning of the Situation in which he ſtands. Eternal Happineſs, and eternal Miſery, are ſet before him. If he chuſes the bad Part, he will find infinite Cauſe to condemn himſelf; but God will be juſtified, whom neither Juſtice nor Goodneſs can oblige to reſcind his own Laws, and to alter a Syſtem, upon the whole wiſely eſtabliſhed, in favour of thoſe who have wilfully refuſed to ſubmit to the Meaſures of his Providence; any more than Civil Authority can be obliged to alter the Conſtitution of a Kingdom, wiſely adapted to the general Good of the Community, to ſave particular Offenders from Puniſhment, how diſproportionate ſoever upon ſome accounts ſuch Puniſhment may

be

be to any Advantage which the Offender may have received by his Diſobedience.

Concluſion. And this brings me to the Concluſion of the firſt Part of my Deſign, which was to ſhew the Credibility of the Goſpel Revelation as to the ſubject Matter of it. I have ſhewn it, in reſpect of the Doctrine of the Fall and its Conſequences—Of the Immortality of the Soul—Of the Reſurrection of the Body—Of the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, and—In reſpect of the Sanction of his Law; in all which Points it appears, that there are ſome things, the Depth of which human Reaſon cannot fathom, but nothing which human Reaſon can diſprove. And this is all that I have to ſay, as to that great Myſtery of all (the only Point of Conſequence which I have not yet touched upon, and which lies at the Bottom of the whole Goſpel Syſtem) the Doctrine of the INCARNATION of the Son of God, and of the TRINITY in UNITY. Each Perſon is ſpoken of in Scripture, as bearing his diſtinct Part in the Work of our Redemption. The *Father* as ſending the Son to ſave us.

The

The *Son* as taking upon him our Nature, and offering himself as a voluntary Sacrifice for Sin. And the *Holy Ghost*, as undertaking the Guardianship and Protection of the Faithful, leading them into all Truth, and enabling them by his perpetual Presence to subdue Lust and Appetite, and to overcome the Temptations of the World. But *how* the divine Nature should unite itself to the human in the Person of *Christ*; or *how* THREE, as distinct in point of Agency as *Peter*, *James*, and *John* are distinct, should by one common Principle of Existence, be THE ONE ETERNAL GOD; this exceeds the Measure of our finite Understandings to comprehend. Yet it is not therefore a Contradiction. Yet it is not therefore incredible. For Contradictions appear by the Comparison of our Ideas in things that are known and understood, not in things to which our Ideas cannot reach, and where, of consequence, there can be no Comparison made.

Unbelievers are apt to think us entitled to their Contempt, when we hide ourselves (as they will call it) under the Cover of Mysteries.

ſteries. But is there any thing ſo becoming a human Creature, as to confeſs the narrow Limits of the human Underſtanding, of which Experience every Day gives us full and ample Conviction? God hath given to every Species of Beings, ſuch Powers as are ſuited to the Rank in which he has placed them; and as there are Multitudes of things open to the Underſtandings of Men, that lie hid from the Underſtandings of Brutes; is it not as eaſy to be conceived, is it not as natural to be ſuppoſed, that there are alſo Multitudes of things hid from the Underſtandings of Men, that are open to the Underſtandings of ſuperior Beings; and that in the one ſupreme, eternal, Mind, there may be Treaſures of Wiſdom which no created Being can look into? But "Why (ſay they) does God ſpeak, "unleſs it be that he may be underſtood?" I anſwer; God does ſpeak to be underſtood, and he *is* underſtood even when he ſpeaketh Myſteries. We underſtand what the Myſtery *ſays*; the *how* or the *why*, we do not underſtand. When we ſpeak of the moſt common Effects of natural Cauſes we ſpeak Myſteries. For all Nature

ture is one great Myſtery. If I ſay, that Water is turned into a ſolid Body; that the Wind blows hot or cold; that the Loadſtone draws Iron, and the like, I declare Myſteries; for the Cauſes of theſe Effects the Underſtanding doth not reach; and yet you know what I mean. And you know as well what I mean when I ſay, that by the Sin of one Man Death entered into the World; that the Soul lives when the Body is diſſolved; that our Corruption ſhall put on Incorruption—and whatever elſe it be that Revelation teaches; though you underſtand not *why* or *how* theſe things are ſo. The Goſpel is a Declaration of *Facts*, relative to God and his moral Government, as our Senſes are the Reporters of *Facts*, which concern the Conſtitution of the material Syſtem; and it would be juſt as reaſonable to diſpute the Truth of our Senſes, becauſe we cannot explain all the various Appearances of Nature, as to deny what God reveals, becauſe you cannot explain the various Principles upon which the Oeconomy of Religion ſtands. What God reveals is as certain and infallible as what our Senſes report;

and

and therefore the only Queſtion now is, Is the Goſpel what it pretends to be, a Revelation from God? And upon this Point the Goſpel is to be heard by its proper Evidence. *Senſe* cannot judge of this, but *Reaſon* may; and if we cannot make it plain to Reaſon, that the Goſpel is from God, we have no more to ſay. You may reject the Goſpel, and ought to reject it, whether you *can* explain its Principles or whether you *cannot* explain them. But if the Evidence be good and ſufficient; mere Difficulties raiſed upon Points in reſpect of which our Faculties may be too ſhort, or many Prerequiſites may be wanting, that are neceſſary to qualify us to judge rightly, are of no real Weight, nor can have any Weight with reaſonable Men. "[p] It is (to uſe the Words of a very able Judge, and a diligent Enquirer into theſe things) "highly right, and the moſt pious Ex- "erciſe of our Underſtanding, to enquire, "with due Reverence into the Ends and "Reaſons of God's Diſpenſations; yet "when thoſe Reaſons are *concealed*, to ar- "gue from our *Ignorance* that ſuch Diſ-

[p] *Analogy of Religion*, Part II. Chap. 5.

"penſations

" penſations cannot be from God, is infinite-
" ly abſurd.—Let Reaſon be kept to, and if
" any Part of the Scripture Account can be
" ſhewn to be *contrary* to it; let the Scrip-
" ture, in the Name of God, be given up.
" But let not ſuch poor Creatures as we ob-
" ject againſt an infinite Scheme, that WE
" DO NOT SEE the Neceſſity or Uſefulneſs
" of all its Parts, and call this REASONING."

The End of the Firſt Part.

CHRISTIANITY

Juſtified upon the

Scripture Foundation.

PART II.

CONTAINING

The EVIDENCE by which the Goſpel is proved to be a divine Revelation.

THE Queſtion being, Whether the Goſpel is or is not a divine Revelation; ſome things concerning Revelation in general, and the Way or Manner in which it may be ſuppoſed poſſible for God to communicate himſelf to Mankind ought to be premiſed. And in order to this, it will be neceſſary to conſider, in what Way our *Of the Poſſibility of Revelation in general.*

natural Knowledge comes; for this attended to, we ſhall the more readily perceive, how we may come at that Knowledge which is *ſupernatural:* And this is that which we mean by the Knowledge of *Revelation.*

Our natural Knowledge of God comes not by any thing of him (*i. e.* of his Nature or Eſſence) that is perceptible by Senſe, but by the *Effects* of his *Power*, which being by Senſe (or otherwiſe) perceptible, Reaſon thence collects or concludes his Exiſtence; as St. *Paul* ſtates the Caſe, *Rom.* i. 20. *The inviſible things of him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* And again, *Acts* xvii. 27. *That they ſhould ſeek the Lord,* even *God that made the World and all things therein, if happily they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move, and have our Being.* In *Nature*, God is far removed from us all; but his *Works* are near at hand, and in them we may read and know him. God is a *Mind* or *Spirit*, and

and we know him in the ſame way that we know that there are other Minds or Spirits, beſides our own; that is, not by any immediate Communication, but by their Effects upon the Inſtruments in which they reſide, and which they animate and put into Motion. This viſible World, with all that it contains, is as truly and properly the Organ of the eternal Mind which reſides in it, and pervades it in every Part, as the human Body is the Organ of the human Mind; and as when I ſee the dull, paſſive Inſtrument moved, and directed with Aptneſs to ſome End, I conclude that there is a reaſonable Soul, which gives it this Direction; ſo when I view the Fabrick of the Heaven and the Earth, and ſee every thing adjuſted with Foreſight and Contrivance, I conclude that there muſt be ſome intelligent Being, which directs the whole, and which is, as it were, the Soul of this immenſe Organ, which ſpeaks its Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs to all that have Hearts to underſtand.

And as by contemplating the Works of the Creation we know that God Is; ſo,

by conſidering the Situation in which we are placed, the Purpoſes we were made to ſerve, and by what Sort of Conduct thoſe Ends will beſt be anſwered; we may likewiſe conclude, in many Points, concerning his WILL. Wiſdom ever acts with a View to ſome wiſe End of acting, which by being propoſed is underſtood to be the Will of the Agent; and there is no human Power or Faculty which has not its proper End, open and manifeſt to us as are the Powers and Faculties themſelves. God has given us (for Inſtance) the Appetite to eat and to drink, and theſe Appetites we certainly know were intended for the Suſtenance and Preſervation of Life, not for its Deſtruction. This therefore opens to us the Duties of Temperance and Sobriety. Furthermore, he hath made us Creatures apt for Society, dependant upon each other, and needing each other's Aſſiſtance. This lays the Foundation for Juſtice and Charity, and all the ſocial Virtues. Laſtly, he hath given us Capacities to know him and the Works of his Providence, and to feel our Obligation to love, fear, and obey him, with ſtrong, natural Preſumptions of obtaining

taining his Favour if we behave well, and of incurring his Diſpleaſure if we do not: All which is the Sum and Subſtance of what we term *Natural Religion*, as it reſults immediately from our *natural State*. And this is all the Religion that ſome Men would have; and they think that God *can* give no other; that is, they think it ſuperfluous that he ſhould make any other Manifeſtation of his Will, than what Reaſon, by contemplating upon the Works of his Providence, can diſcover. But it is very obvious to be underſtood, that though Natural Religion is and muſt be the *End*[a] of all God's Manifeſtations of himſelf to Man, it may not be the *Meaſure* of them all; becauſe Reaſons may ariſe from the Conduct of Men, in conſequence of the Freedom of their Natures, which may make farther Manifeſtations neceſſary. And this is what, we ſay, was, and what the Goſpel ſuppoſes to have been the Caſe. For Man ſinned

[a] Omnis Religionis *inſtitutæ* fundamentum, eſt Religio *naturalis*; a qua oriuntur et in quam refunduntur, ut fluvii in Oceanum, omnes Oeconomiæ particulares a Deo conſtitutæ. *Burnet De Stat. mort. & reſurgent.* Cap. x. p. 261.

againſt his Maker, and thereby made it neceſſary that God ſhould open to him a Method of Reconciliation, and preſcribe Means that ſhould be ſuitable to his fallen Condition. There is a wide Difference between a State of Perfection and a State of Sin; and to ſay, that the ſame Kind of Applications that are ſuitable to the one are ſuitable alſo to both, is as if you ſhould ſay, that the ſame Regimen that is proper for a Man in Health, is as fit for him when he is ſick, and over-run with Diſtempers.

They who think they can find a Method of Reconciliation for Sinners in the Natural Law, and that unaſſiſted Reaſon is as good a Preſervative againſt Vice and Corruption as the Goſpel is; are at Liberty to ſhew it when they can. But this Objection has in the main been obviated in the former Part of this Work, and ſhall (God willing) be more diſtinctly ſpoken to in the Cloſe of the whole. It is not at leaſt ſo clear a Point, that it ought to ſtand as a Bar againſt any Evidence, that can be produced to ſhew that in fact God *has* made farther Manifeſtations of himſelf. Taking it then *ex Hypotheſi*,

Hypotheſi, that there may be Reaſons why God ſhould communicate his Will to us, in certain Points which do not reſult from our natural State; the Queſtion is, in what way it may be conceived poſſible, that God may make ſuch farther Manifeſtations. That in ſome way or other it is poſſible, there would be no Senſe in diſputing. For when the meaneſt among Men have the Power to communicate their Thoughts or Conceptions one to another, ſhall we deny this Power to the ſupreme Being, the Maker of us all? Let us conſider then, if you pleaſe, how a Man opens his Mind to a Man, and we ſhall perceive, how God may reveal himſelf to a Man.

There are certain Points in which I know every Man's Mind, as infallibly as I know my own, by the moſt common and familiar Actions of his Life. As, that he deſires Food and Raiment, with all other things that are neceſſary or convenient for him. That, he would be treated with Juſtice and Humanity, by thoſe with whom he has to do; and that it will be diſpleaſing and vexatious to him, to be hurt in his

Body

Body or in his Property. We all underſtand (I ſay) one another's Minds in ſuch Points as theſe. The common Nature, and the common Purſuits of Mankind ſhew it. But if I would know a Man's Mind in any *particular Caſe*; as whether he is willing to give or to lend me a Sum of Money, or to pay me ſuch or ſuch a Price for my Goods; I cannot learn this from his general Conduct, but he muſt *ſpeak*, or *write*, or do ſome *particular Act* whereby to inform me. In like manner, though (as has been obſerved) by conſidering the natural eſtabliſhed Order of things, we may collect the Mind or Will of God, as to that kind of Behaviour which the natural eſtabliſhed Order of things enforceth; yet in Points which do not fall within the Compaſs of natural Knowledge, the Will of God muſt be collected, not from the natural eſtabliſhed Order of things, but by ſome *ſpecial* Act of his Power, diſtinguiſhed from all *common* and *ordinary* Effects, and theſe Effects are thoſe which we term *Miraculous*. Speech is a kind of Miracle in reſpect of the Power of Man; and a Miracle is as truly the Language of God, as the articulate Pronun-

Pronunciation of Words is the Language of a Man; and the Force and Virtue of each to open the Sentiments of the Mind, is to be reſolved into the ſame Principles. For when a Man ſpeaks to me, I conſider the Motion of the Organ by which he ſpeaks as under the Power and Direction of his Will; and when I underſtand what Ideas ſuch or ſuch Words expreſs, his Veracity ſuppoſed, I know his Ideas, his Sentiments, his Determinations, *i. e.* I underſtand his Mind. In like manner I conſider all miraculous Effects, that is, all Variations from the natural Order of things, as under the Direction of that infinite Mind by which the natural Order itſelf was at firſt eſtabliſhed; and when I ſee the Purpoſe for which ſuch Effects are produced, and what Ideas or Sentiments they are intended to raiſe in my Mind, I know the Will of God in that Point with much more Certainty than I know the Mind of Man by his ſpeaking to me; becauſe Man may deceive me, but God cannot deceive me. But becauſe things of this ſort will be beſt underſtood by Examples, I ſhall produce one great Example, that of *Moſes* when he was

ſent

ſent to bring the Children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*. I am not now concerned with the *Truth* of the Hiſtory. But the Facts ſuppoſed as the Hiſtory records, I will ſhew where the Force of them, to prove *Moſes's* divine Miſſion, lies; and the Reſolution of one Caſe, will be the Reſolution of all other Caſes of a like Nature.

The Introduction to this Story we have in the iii[d] Chapter of the Book of *Exodus*, where it is ſaid, ver. 2. that *the Angel of the Lord appeared unto Moſes in a Flame of Fire, out of the midſt of a Buſh: And he looked, and behold the Buſh burned with Fire, and the Buſh was not conſumed.* The thing extraordinary or miraculous, in this Appearance, was, that the Buſh burned with Fire, *and was not conſumed.* This was what drew *Moſes's* Attention, and filled him with Wonder; not that the Buſh was on Fire (for this might have happened by ſome common Accident) but that Fire, whoſe known Property it is to feed upon and deſtroy the Subject it occupies, ſhould not conſume the Buſh, which appeared to him to be all on fire. *I will now* (ſays he)

turn

turn aſide and ſee this great Sight, why the Buſh is not burnt, ver. 3. Had the Matter ended here, *Moſes* could have concluded nothing. He would have ſeen a ſtrange unaccountable thing, and that is all. But what preſently followed cleared up his Doubts. An audible, articulate Voice came out of the Buſh that was on fire, conveying a diſtinct, intelligible Senſe, in theſe Words, *I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob—I have ſeen the Affliction of my People which are in Egypt*;—*Come and I will ſend thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayeſt bring them forth*, ver. 6—10. Here was a ſecond Miracle added to the firſt: *Language, human* Language, when there was no human Creature preſent to utter it. We cannot form articulate Sounds without the proper Organs of Speech. But God, to whom all Nature ſerves as an Inſtrument, can; and God being ſuppoſed as the Author of the Miracle, *Moſes* had the Evidence of God's Will, in the ſame way that we have the Evidence of a Man's Will, when we hear him ſpeaking.

When

When God reveals himſelf by a Miracle, it is ſuppoſed that the Miracle conveys ſome intelligible Senſe, as in this Caſe. For to *reveal* is to declare or diſcover *ſomething*. A Miracle may be wrought which conveys no Meaning; and this would have been the Caſe here, if *Moſes* had only ſeen the Buſh on fire without being burnt, but had heard nothing, nor otherwiſe had been informed what it meant. But a Miracle without Meaning, is nothing more than Words without Meaning, or than Speech in a Language not underſtood. It *informs* us of nothing, and therefore is no *Revelation*. But though ſome Meaning is eſſential to Revelation, it is not neceſſary that this Meaning ſhould be conveyed by articulate Sounds, or that the Miracle ſhould ſtrike upon the outward Senſes. For God being intimate to the Mind of Man, can make ſuch Impreſſions there by an immediate Act of his Power, as, by being clearly diſtinguiſhable from all its natural Motions and Operations, ſhall appear to be his Work, conveying to it ſuch or ſuch Ideas, and forming them into diſtinct Propoſitions, as

Voice and Language do. How this is done it is impoſſible for us to underſtand, but the Poſſibility of it is very eaſy to be conceived; and this we may ſuppoſe to have been the Caſe in *Dreams* and *Viſions*, of which frequent mention is made in the Old Teſtament. But the Manner in which God is moſt frequently repreſented as diſcovering himſelf, is by Voices and outward Appearances. Of *Adam* it is ſaid, that he *heard the Voice* of God, and that God *ſpake* to him. Of *Abraham*, that God *appeared* to him, and *communed* with him. How he appeared it is not always ſaid, but it is always to be ſuppoſed, that he appeared in a manner diſtinguiſhable from all common Appearances; and it is probable, that the *Voice* and the *Appearance* ordinarily accompanied each other, as they are repreſented to have done in the Caſe of *Moſes*. It may ſeem perhaps difficult to underſtand, how God ſhould have manifeſted himſelf to the firſt Man in his moſt early State, when, naturally, he could not have the Knowledge of Language, and when all Nature was to him new and ſurprizing. But as it is certain, that if God had never revealed himſelf

ſelf to the firſt Pair, they would by Degrees have found out a Language for themſelves; ſo there is as little room to doubt, but that he, by his Power, might ſupply to them that Knowledge in an Inſtant, which their Poſterity were to come at gradually, by Uſe and Experience; and that the Symbols of the divine Preſence might have been attended with ſuch peculiar Circumſtances of Majeſty and Terror, as would convince them, that he who appeared and ſpake to them, could be nothing leſs than the Author of their Being.

But to return to *Moſes's* Story. There were two things which God had to do. The firſt was to convince *Moſes* himſelf, that it was HE who ſpake to him; and this was the Uſe of the Miracles of the *burning Buſh*, and the Voice that iſſued from thence; the other was to furniſh proper Evidence, to convince the People that God had ſent him; and this was not yet provided for. For had *Moſes* gone immediately to the People, and only reported what he had ſeen and heard at the Buſh, it is likely they would not have believed him.

Moſes

Moſes himſelf felt this Difficulty, and therefore ſaid to God, *Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my Voice; for they will ſay, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee*, Chap. iv. ver. 1. And what follows immediately, ſhews him to have been in the right; for *the Lord ſaid unto him, What is that in thine Hand? And he ſaid, a Rod. And he ſaid, Caſt it on the Ground; and he caſt it on the Ground, and it became a Serpent; and Moſes fled from before it. And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Put forth thine Hand, and take it by the Tail. And he put forth his Hand and caught it, and it became a Rod in his Hand.* THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE (ſays the Text) *that the Lord God of their Fathers*—HATH APPEARED *unto thee*, ver. 2—5. The Meaning is, that what he had now done in the Preſence of God, *that* he ſhould alſo perform in the Sight of his Brethren, who would by this, and ſuch like Proofs, be convinced that God had ſent him. So it follows, ver. 17. *And thou ſhalt take this Rod in thine Hand, wherewith thou ſhalt do Signs.* And at ver. 30, we read, that *Aaron ſpake all the Words which God had ſpoken to Moſes, and*

did the Signs in the Sight of the People, and the People believed—and bowed the Head and worſhipped. *Aaron* did the Signs, but it was at the Command of *Moſes*, whoſe Rod he bore, and to whom God had made him his *Spokeſman to the People*, as we ſee, ver. 14, 15.

The Truth of theſe Facts (as I have before ſaid) ſuppoſed; let us now ſee how the Evidence ariſes, to prove to the People that *Moſes* came to them by the Authority of God. And the firſt and principal thing to be attended to is, that the turning the Rod into a Serpent was not, properly ſpeaking, the Act of *Moſes*, but the Act of that ſuperior Being, in whoſe Name *Moſes* was ſent, which ſuperior Being is now ſuppoſed to be GOD. This is evident to common Senſe. For *Moſes* did no more than caſt his Rod upon the Ground; and there is certainly no natural Connection between caſting a Stick upon the Ground, and its becoming a Serpent. So when *Moſes put* his *Hand into* his *Boſom and it came out leprous*; this Effect was not the Act of *Moſes*, but the Act of God; there being nothing at

at all in the Circumſtance of a Man's putting his Hand into his Boſom, and taking it out again, as to its being *leprous* or *not* leprous. In both Caſes, what *Moſes* did was *introductive* of the Miracle; in neither of them the proper *efficient Cauſe*. And this is univerſally true of all Miracles, which, though in form of Language or Expreſſion they are often given to Men as the *Authors* or *Workers*, becauſe Men do ſome Act or other in conſequence of which the Miracle follows, yet are indeed, and muſt be underſtood to be, the Work of ſome ſuperior Power. And therefore, though God here ſays to *Moſes*, *Thou ſhalt take this Rod in thine Hand, wherewith* THOU SHALT DO *Signs*; and though it is likewiſe ſaid of *Aaron*, that HE DID *the Signs in the Sight of the People*; yet, in other Places, the Language runs with more ſtrict Propriety, and God takes the Work to HIMSELF; as particularly Chap. iii. ver. 20. *I will ſtretch out* MY *Hand, and ſmite Egypt with all* MY *Wonders, which* I WILL DO *in the midſt thereof.* Many Paſſages there are to the ſame Purpoſe, which every one will obſerve for himſelf in read-

ing this Hiſtory, and which it would therefore be ſuperfluous to ſet down.

This then being the Caſe, the Reſolution will ſtand thus; that the *Iſraelites* were to believe that God had ſent *Moſes*, becauſe when he came to them in his Name, and delivered a Meſſage as from him, he, by his Hands, or in conſequence of certain Acts by him performed, wrought Miracles in their Sight. If *Moſes* had not come in the Name of God, to deliver ſome Meſſage as from him, the Miracles would have had no Meaning. They could have proved nothing becauſe there was nothing to be proved. If he had thrown down his Rod in their Sight, and it had become a Serpent; if he had put his Hand into his Boſom, and it had come out leprous; if he had ſmote the Waters, and they had been turned into Blood; if he had done theſe things, I ſay, and all that you read of beſides, and SAID NOTHING; they would have wondered, they would have been aſtoniſhed, but nothing could they have underſtood. But when there was a plain, intelligible Meſſage, delivered as from God, the

the Miracles which followed, and which are ſuppoſed in the Argument to have been the Work or the Act of God, were the ſame Evidence to the *Iſraelites* that *Moſes* was ſent from God to deliver that Meſſage, as what *Moſes* ſaw and heard at the burning Buſh was to him, that God ſpake to him. The ſingle Difference between the two Caſes is, that the Voice by which *Moſes* received the Meſſage, was miraculous; that by which the *Iſraelites* received it, was human. But this makes no Difference at all in the Evidence; it being to all Intents and Purpoſes the ſame thing, whether I ſpeak my Mind myſelf, or by any ſignificant Act or Token ſhew my Aſſent to what another Perſon ſays for me.

If you ſhould think fit to aſk, Where was the *Significancy* of the Miracle as a *Token*, to ſhew that God was conſenting to the Meſſage which *Moſes* delivered; I anſwer, It lay in the *Connection* of the Miracle with the Meſſage; of which no reaſonable Account can be given, without ſuppoſing that it was intended to give Teſtimony to what *Moſes* ſaid. The Conſtruction is

juſt the ſame, as when a Man ſets his Hand and Seal to a Writing drawn up by a Scribe; which nobody does, who does not mean to be underſtood as ſignifying thereby, that what the Writing contains is his Act and Deed. To what end could it ſerve, that God ſhould turn a Rod into a Serpent? Was it merely to raiſe Wonder in thoſe who ſaw it? If even this could be ſuppoſed; yet why by the Intervention of *Moſes?* Why *juſt at that Time*, when he was pretending a Commiſſion from him? A Man may write his Name to ſhew his Skill in Writing; or ſtamp his Seal upon Wax to ſhew the Art of the Engraver: But he would not chuſe to make ſuch Experiments upon a Deed of Conveyance, when a piece of blank Paper would ſerve as well. Whatever kind or Species of Miracles you ſuppoſe, the Reaſoning will be the ſame. Miracles are as various as are the Effects of natural Operations; and inſtead of turning a Rod into a Serpent, *Moſes* might, if God had ſo pleaſed, have raiſed a dead Man to Life, or reſtored a ſick Man to immediate Health and Soundneſs, by the Word of Command: Or he might have performed

ſome Wonder of the hurtful kind, as he afterwards did many, when *Pharaoh* ſlighted his Meſſage, and refuſed to let the People go. In Caſes of this ſort it may be ſuggeſted (and it often has been ſuggeſted) that all that the Miracle ſhews is, that God intends ſome Hurt, or ſome Benefit, to the Perſons concerned; but that nothing certain can be concluded as to God's Will in reſpect of any Doctrine which the Perſons commiſſioned to work ſuch Miracles ſhall ſhall deliver as from God. I make no queſtion but God may work Miracles merely for the Benefit or for the Puniſhment of thoſe who are the Subject of them; and, for ought we can tell, he doth it every Day. But if this is ALL, the Queſtion will yet remain unanſwered—Why by ſuch or ſuch Hands? Why by *Moſes*, or *Chriſt*, or *Paul*, when there are a Variety of other Inſtruments before him? This Circumſtance, I ſay; this *Connection* of the Miracle with the *Men* and their *Pretenſions*, is not accounted for, nor can it be accounted for otherwiſe, than by ſuppoſing that the Miracle is intended to give Credit to ſuch Pretenſions, and to

make the Act or Declaration of Man equivalent to the Act or Declaration of God himſelf.

By the Help of the foregoing Obſervations, we may be able to give a ſhort and ſatisfactory Anſwer to a common Objection, againſt the Evidence of Miracles to ſhew the Will of God, which is, That "a Man "empowered to work Miracles, being na- "turally a free Agent, is at liberty to uſe "ſuch Power well or ill, by annexing it "either to Truth or to Falſhood, as he ſhall "think fit." I do not think that any Argument will lie from what a Man may do in reſpect of his natural Powers, to what he may do in reſpect of ſupernatural Powers, if there are (properly ſpeaking) any ſuch Powers in Man. For the natural Powers of Man were given to anſwer the Ends of Providence in reſpect of Man's natural State; and theſe Ends not only will admit but do require, that he ſhould be left to his natural Liberty to uſe ſuch Powers well or ill, as he ſhall think fit. But the ſupernatural Power in queſtion is underſtood to be given to anſwer a ſupernatural End, that is,

is, to declare the Mind or Will of God in Points which fall not within the Compaſs of natural Knowledge. And with this End it is manifeſtly inconſiſtent to ſuppoſe, that a Man endued with ſuch Power ſhould be left at Liberty to uſe it well or ill, to eſtabliſh Truth or Falſhood as he thinks fit. The natural and neceſſary Preſumption in this Caſe is, either that God will not grant the Power of working Miracles to a Man who, he knew (and know he muſt) would abuſe that Power; or elſe that he would immediately withdraw it, to his Shame and Confuſion, whenever he ſhould preſume to declare any thing in his Name, which he had not given him in Commiſſion to declare; in like manner as a ſovereign Prince would certainly recall an Embaſſador who ſhould exceed the Limits of the Powers granted him. But the ſhort Anſwer is this. The Power of working Miracles is not a Power inherent in Man as his natural Powers are. Man does ſome natural Act upon which the Miracle is *attendant* (as *Moſes* did when he threw his Rod upon the Ground) but the Miracle (as has been ſhewn) is the Work of a ſuperior Being,

which

which ſuperior Being is now ſuppoſed to be GOD. The Queſtion therefore is, not how MAN may uſe *his* Power, but how GOD will uſe *his* ; and to ſay that God will uſe his Power to give Credit to a Lye, is great Madneſs and Impiety.

The Concluſion then is this, that when a Perſon, pretending a Commiſſion from God, ſhall declare any thing in his Name, or as from him, and Miracles are wrought in ſupport of ſuch Pretenſions ; ſuch Miracles (ſuppoſing them to be the Work of God) are Evidence of his Will as declared by ſuch Perſon ; and God does as truly reveal himſelf to and by ſuch Perſon, as one Man reveals himſelf to another when he ſpeaks, or writes, or does any other Act whereby his Will, Intention, or Determination is known or underſtood. How the Caſe will ſtand, when *intermediate* Beings are called into the Queſtion, will be conſidered hereafter. At preſent I am only giving a general Idea how it may be poſſible for God to make known his Will to Mankind in Points, which fall not within the reach of natural Knowledge ; in order to prepare

prepare the Way to the Evidence for *Chriſt's* Miſſion, to which I now haſten.

The Evidence of Chriſt's Miſſion in general.

As we took the Pretenſions of *Chriſt* from his own Doctrines, as they are recorded in the New Teſtament by thoſe who were his firſt Diſciples and Followers; it will be as reaſonable to take the Evidence of his Miſſion alſo from himſelf; a general Account of which we have, *Matt.* xi. 2—5. where we read, that *when John had heard in Priſon the Works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his Diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or do we look for another?* To which *Jeſus* anſwers; *Go and ſhew* John *again thoſe things which ye do hear and ſee: The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleanſed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raiſed up, and the Poor have the Goſpel preached unto them.*

Our firſt Remark muſt be upon the Baptiſt's Queſtion, Art thou he that SHOULD COME? Which implies, that SOMEBODY WAS to come. For the underſtanding

ſtanding of which we muſt obſerve, that the *Jews* had in their Hands the Books of the Old Teſtament, which they had received from their Fathers as the *Oracles* of God: And from theſe Books they had been taught to expect, that ſome great Prophet was to come, whom they called the MESSIAH or CHRIST. This Opinion was ſo common at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance, that it was in every one's Mouth. A poor Woman of *Samaria* could ſay, *I know that* THE MESSIAS *cometh, which is called* CHRIST: *When he is come he will tell us all things*, John iv. 25. And *Luke* iii. 15. we find *all Men muſing in their Hearts of John, whether he were* THE CHRIST *or no.* This Character *Jeſus* (in his Anſwer to the Woman) challenges to himſelf; *I that ſpeak unto thee* AM HE, *John* iv. 26. It is in ſupport of this Character, therefore, that he muſt be underſtood as appealing to the Books of the Old Teſtament, when he ſays to the *Jews*, John v. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which teſtify of me*; that is, which teſtify of me *that I am* THE CHRIST.

We

We see now the Meaning of the Baptist's Question, *Art thou he that should come?* That is, "Art thou *the Christ?* "Art thou that great Prophet, which the "Scriptures foreshew; or, of whose Com-"ing the Scriptures speak?" Our Saviour gives no direct Answer to the Question, but refers to the *Evidence* of his Mission, and leaves him to judge for himself; which is the same thing as if he had asserted his Character in the most express Terms. And what was the Evidence? This—*the Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them.* To *cure Diseases* (as *Christ* did) without the Use of natural Means; to *raise the Dead to Life*, to which no natural Means are equal; these are Works of the miraculous kind: *Miracles* therefore stand as *one* Part of the Evidence. But to *preach to the Poor*, hath nothing in it that is miraculous. This must be *descriptive*; that is, it must point at some Part of *Christ's* Character, which the Scriptures give as the Character of the Prophet that

that was to come; and by challenging to himſelf this one Part of the Character, he is to be underſtood as challenging the whole; which, in effect, he doth when he appeals to the Scriptures, as *teſtifying of* him. For the Scriptures could not *teſtify* of him, otherwiſe than by *foreſhewing* what was *accompliſhed in* him. To the Evidence of *Miracles*, therefore, *Chriſt* adds the *Concurrence* of *Prophecy*: And *neceſſary* to the Evidence this *Concurrence* is; not becauſe it is univerſally true, that Evidence from Miracles cannot be good, without the Concurrence of Prophecy: For Revelation muſt have a Beginning ſomewhere; and wherever it *begins*, it muſt ſtand upon Miracles ſingly. Prophecy, in the very Notion of it, is *prior* to the Event to be accompliſhed, or to every *Perſon* or *Thing* it foreſhews; but no Revelation can be *prior* to the *firſt*: And therefore Evidence from Miracles there muſt be *ſomewhere*, in the Nature of it full and complete, abſtracted from all Conſiderations of *Prophecy*. If Prophecy had ſaid nothing of *Chriſt*, nor *Chriſt* appealed to the Prophets, he would not have wanted Prophecy to ſupport his Miſſion.

Mission. Miracles might have been sufficient without it. But since the Scriptures did foreshew a Prophet that was to come, and since *Jesus* claimed to be that Prophet; it is absolutely necessary that this Claim should be made good; otherwise his Mission cannot be established. And how is this Claim to be made good? Why, by the very Method which our Saviour prescribed to the *Jews*, and by no other; that is, by *searching* the Scriptures. We have the same Scriptures now that they had then, and what they do, or do not say concerning the Prophet which was to come, is a Question of Fact, of which our Sense and Reason qualifies us to judge, and which therefore cannot be decided by Miracles, but must be determined by its proper natural Evidence. Let us therefore consult the Old Testament, and see what Notices we can find there of a Prophet that was to come. I shall take this Matter up from the Beginning, and carry the Enquiry downward through every Age to the Conclusion of Prophecy.

The

Of the Evidence from Prophecy.

The Hiſtory of the Bible, from the Creation to the Flood, is exceeding ſhort, and affords but one Prophecy to our Purpoſe, but that a very material one, and the Foundation of all the reſt. It is contained in the Sentence which God paſſed upon the Serpent, immediately after the Fall; *And I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed,* IT SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD, AND THOU SHALT BRUISE HIS HEEL, *Gen.* iii. 15. When we come to the Times of *Abraham* we read, that God ſaid unto him, *Get thee out of thy Country, and from thy Kindred, and from thy Father's Houſe, unto a Land that I will ſhew thee, and I will make of thee a great Nation,* &c. *and* IN THEE SHALL ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED, Chap. xii. 1—3. The ſame Promiſe we find made to *Iſaac*, Gen. xxvi. 4. *And in* THY SEED *ſhall all the Nations of the Earth* be bleſſed. By which we perceive, that the Promiſe made to *Abraham* did not belong to him *perſonally*, but to *his Seed*; as it is here given not to *Iſaac* perſonally,

perſonally, but to *his Seed.* I lay theſe two Prophecies together, becauſe they throw Light the one upon the other. For if you underſtood the Promiſe, that the Seed of the Woman ſhould *bruiſe the Serpent's Head*, to mean, that by her Seed Mankind ſhould *gain a Victory* over the Serpent, in the Reſtoration of that Happineſs to which they were created, and which was now loſt by Tranſgreſſion; you will have Reaſon to underſtand what was afterwards ſaid to *Abraham*, that in him *all the Families of the Earth* (or, as it is expreſſed Chap. xviii. 18. all the *Nations* of the Earth) *ſhould be bleſſed*, as conveying the ſame Promiſe. And, on the other hand, if you thus underſtand the Promiſe made to *Abraham*, it will be a Key to open to you the true Interpretation of the original Promiſe, made to the Woman's *Seed* in the Sentence denounced upon the Serpent: And hard, and, in truth, impoſſible it is to find any ſound Senſe for either of the Promiſes than this. To interpret the Expreſſion of *bruiſing the Serpent's Head* merely in a literal Senſe, and as it may be applicable to the brute Animal only, gives (as

the learned [b] Author of the *Use of Prophecy* has observed) a Sense of no kind of Importance, and utterly disagreeable to the Solemnity of the Transaction then on foot. And how are we to understand this, that *Abraham* was to be a *Blessing* to *all the Nations of the Earth?* When God made him this Promise, he told him (as we have seen) that he would make of him *a great Nation*; and upon his second Appearance (of which we have an Account at the 7th Verse of the same Chapter) he promises to *give the Land of Canaan to his Seed.* But this did not make him a Blessing to all Nations; for what was the rest of the World the better for *Abraham's* temporal Greatness, or by his Posterity's inheriting the Land of *Canaan?* The Seed of *Abraham*, when they came to take Possession of *Canaan*, were a *Scourge* and a *Terror* to many Nations: To whom they were a *Blessing*, I cannot tell; but for certain they were not a Blessing to all the World; and yet all the World had an Interest in this Promise. But if you will call in the Help of an easy, significant Metaphor, and suppose the *bruising* of the *Serpent's Head by the Woman's Seed*

[b] Dr. *Sherlock.*

to

to denote (as I have ſaid) the *Victory* which the Woman's Seed ſhould obtain over the Serpent; this will contain a Senſe ſuitable to the Importance of the Subject, and proper to ſupport the Hopes of our firſt Parents in their loſt Condition. And if you ſuppoſe the ſame Promiſe conveyed to *Abraham* and his Seed; we ſhall eaſily ſee how he was a Bleſſing to all the Nations of the World: For as the Victory obtained by the Serpent over our firſt Parents was a *Curſe* upon all their Poſterity; ſo the Recovery of this Loſs, by the Woman's Seed being victorious over HIM, muſt be a *Bleſſing* to all their Poſterity [c].

[c] It may be very fit to be obſerved here, that the *Reality* of this Prophecy hath no Dependance upon the *literal* Interpretation of the Hiſtory of the Fall. You may think as you pleaſe of the preciſe Nature of *Adam's* Sin, and of the *Serpent*, and his Diſcourſe with *Eve*; but the *Sentence of God.* which followed the Tranſgreſſion, muſt be underſtood as ſhewing the *real Effects* of it. To *Adam* God ſays——*Curſed is the Ground*, &c.——To *Eve*——*In Sorrow ſhalt thou bring forth Children*, &c.——Theſe are *real Puniſhments* which are ſeen and felt; and the Hiſtory aſſigns the Cauſe of them. Now, for the ſame reaſon that the Sentence againſt the *Man* and *Woman* muſt be underſtood as declaring a *real Curſe*; the Sentence againſt the *Serpent*, in which it is ſaid that the *Woman's Seed* ſhould

This Promiſe made to *Abraham*, and then to *Iſaac*, we afterwards find ſettled in *Jacob*, to whom God likewiſe ſays, *In thee and in thy Seed ſhall all the Families of the Earth be bleſſed*, Gen. xxviii. 14. This opens to us the Meaning of what his Father *Iſaac* ſaid to him, when he gave him his laſt Bleſſing; *Let the People ſerve thee, and Nations bow down to thee; be Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Sons bow down to thee. Curſed be every one that curſeth thee, and bleſſed be he that bleſſeth thee*, Gen. xxvii. 29. The Scripture places this in a prophetic Light, and as a Prophecy we are to underſtand it. For *Iſaac*, when he gave the Bleſſing, ſuppoſed that he had given it to *Eſau*, and not to *Jacob*; and if he had meant only to expreſs his own Hopes or Wiſhes, when he found out his Miſtake, it is natural to think, he would have recalled it. But he felt (we are to ſuppoſe) the Power of God upon his Mind, and being ſenſible that God could not be deceived, and that his Purpoſe muſt ſtand, inſtead

bruiſe his Head, muſt be underſtood as declaring a *real Bleſſing*. The Queſtion only is, what this *real Bleſſing* is; and if you take the Interpretation above; the Language (as I have ſaid) will be *metaphorical*, but there will be no *Allegory*.

of

of recalling the Bleſſing, he moſt ſolemnly confirms it, *I have bleſſed him*, YEA AND HE SHALL BE BLESSED, ver. 33. It is viſible that the Words,—*curſed be every one that curſeth thee, and bleſſed be he that bleſſeth thee*, are the very Words which God ſpake to *Abraham*, when he made the original Promiſe, *Gen.* xii. 3. A very ſtrong Preſumption that *Jacob* was now put in *Abraham's* Place. And though *Iſaac* does not ſay (what I find no where ſaid but by God himſelf) *in thee ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed*; he ſays what manifeſtly implies it: *Let People ſerve thee, and let Nations bow down to thee*; *be Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Sons bow down to thee.* It will be ſhewn when we come lower down, that the *Meſſiah* is characterized as one who was to *rule over all Nations*; and the Promiſe of being *a Bleſſing to all Nations* is ſo conſiderable a thing, that wherever it paſſes it naturally gives the *Pre-eminence*; and where we find the *Pre-eminence*, there we are to look for the Promiſe. *Noah* gave it to *Shem* by giving him the Pre-eminence. *Bleſſed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan ſhall be his Servant*, Gen. ix. 26. Here God is ſtyled empha-

tically, or by way of Eminence, *the God* of *Shem*; and ſo he is afterwards ſtyled, *the God* of *Abraham*, *the God* of *Iſaac*, and *the God* of *Jacob*. But why the God of *Shem*, and not the God of *Japhet?* Or why the God of *Iſaac*, and not the God of *Iſhmael?* Or why the God of *Jacob*, and not the God of *Eſau?* Why this Diſtinction, I ſay, but becauſe the Promiſe of that *Seed* which was to be a Bleſſing to all Nations, was limited to *them*, excluſive of the others? For in any other reſpect there was no Difference. This then ſerves to explain the Bleſſing afterwards given by *Jacob* himſelf to his Son *Judah*, in which the Promiſe is conveyed in like Terms. *Judah, thou art he whom thy Brethren ſhall praiſe; thy Hand ſhall be in the Neck of thine Enemies; thy Father's Children ſhall bow down before thee*, Gen. xlix. 8. God did not *appear* to *Judah* as he had done before to *Iſaac*, and confirm to him the Promiſe, that in him all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed; for this Method of Communication with the ſeveral Heads of Families, which was carried on during the Time of their ſojourning in the Land of *Canaan*, ceaſed when they went down into *Egypt*, and

and God ſpake to them no otherwiſe than by his Prophets. In this Quality we conſider *Jacob*, and *Joſeph*; the latter of which propheſied (as the former alſo had done) of the Return of the *Iſraelites* back to *Canaan*, but ſays nothing of the Promiſe of the Bleſſing to all Nations. Here therefore we muſt leave that Promiſe to reſt upon the Head of *Judah*, till we come down to the Time of *Moſes*; for from hence, during their whole Stay in *Egypt*, Revelation was ſuſpended. Whether that *Seed* by which the Bleſſing was to come, was *one* or *more*, the foregoing Prophecies do not ſay. But we ſhall find Reaſon enough hereafter to fix it in ONE PERSON, and I think that *Jacob* has ſo fixed it in the latter Part of his Prophecy, *the Sceptre ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until* SHILOH *come, and unto him ſhall the Gathering of the People be*, Gen. xlix. 10.

In interpreting the foregoing Prophecies I have followed the Senſe of the learned Writer before-mentioned, to whom I muſt refer thoſe who deſire farther Satisfaction. But if this is right, it is clear that Prophecy thus far bears Teſtimony to *Jeſus*

Christ, who has taken upon himself the very Character that Prophecy gives to the Seed that was to come, *viz.* the *bruising the* Serpent's *Head*, the *triumphing* over *Death* by *raising* us from the Dead, and *restoring* to the whole human Race the Blessing of *eternal Life*, that was forfeited by Transgression.—To go on therefore with our Enquiry. The next Prophet that appeared after the Death of *Joseph* was MOSES. But he was not THAT SEED in whom all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed, but the Minister of that Part of the Covenant in which God had promised to give the Land of *Canaan* to *Abraham's* Posterity, as appears from the Account himself gives of his own Mission, in the third Chapter of the Book of *Exodus*. *I have surely seen the Affliction of my People that are in Egypt—and am come down to deliver them —and to bring them up out of that Land— unto the Place of the Canaanites and the Hittites*, &c.—*Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh*, ver. 7—10. This was the End of *Moses's* Mission, and to this End his Law had relation. But as *Christ* hath told us, that he *came not to* DESTROY *the Law, or the Prophets, but to* FULFIL

FULFIL *them* (Matt. v. 17.) it is neceſſary, in order to juſtify his Appeal to the Old Teſtament, to ſhew that his Eſtabliſhment correſponds with what the Law and the Prophets have ſet forth. And this will carry us to conſider a little more diſtinctly what was the Nature and Conſtitution of *Moſes's* Law, and what the Prophets have ſpoken concerning it; which I ſhall do before I proceed any farther in the general View of Prophecy.

When the *Iſraelites* went down into *Egypt*, they were the Worſhippers of the one true God, the Lord *Jehovah*, and of him only. This Worſhip was not loſt during their Stay in *Egypt*, but much corrupted by the idolatrous Worſhip of the *Egyptians*. *Joſhua* expreſly charges it upon them, that their *Fathers ſerved* [other] *Gods in* EGYPT, *Joſh.* xxiv. 14. *Ezekiel* gives the ſame Account, Chap. xx. 8. and xxiii. 3. 8. And *Moſes* ſuppoſes it when he ſays, *They ſhall no more offer their Sacrifices unto Devils, after whom they have gone a whoring*, Levit. xvii. 7. This then having been the Caſe, that they were even now corrupted by Idolatry, and in danger of being more ſo by mixing with the idolatrous

trous Nations, whom they were going to diſpoſſeſs; ſome ſtrong Remedy was neceſſary to purge them from this Corruption, and to preſerve them from future Miſchief. To this Purpoſe the Law was given, to make them God's own *Peculiar*, a Nation *ſeparated*, by Rites and Ordinances of his own Appointment, from every Nation under Heaven. This appears from thoſe Words of *Moſes*, which ſtand at the Foot of the whole Catalogue of the ceremonial and political Laws of the *Jews*, Deut. xxvi. 16—19. where he ſays, *The Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do theſe Statutes and Judgments—Thou haſt avouched the Lord this Day to be* THY GOD—*and the Lord hath avouched thee this Day to be* HIS PECULIAR PEOPLE—*that thou mayeſt be an* HOLY PEOPLE *unto the Lord thy God.* Accordingly the Law forbids all Communion with the idolatrous Nations, whom they were commanded to deſtroy, but they were to make *no Covenant* with them, neither *make Marriages with them*; *thy Daughter thou ſhalt not give unto his Son, nor his Daughter ſhalt thou take unto thy Son*; *for they will turn away thy Son from following me, that they may ſerve other Gods*

Gods—But thus ſhall ye deal with them. Ye ſhall deſtroy their Altars and break down their Images, &c.—*for thou art an* HOLY PEOPLE *unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath choſen thee to be a* SPECIAL PEOPLE *unto himſelf, above all People that are upon the Face of the Earth.* Deut. vii. 1—7.

The Law of *Moſes* then having been appointed as an Inſtrument, whereby to *ſeparate* the *Iſraelites* from all other Nations; one thing is very plain, which is, that it could never have been intended as the Law by which all Mankind muſt be ſaved. It is farther manifeſt, that this Law being relative to the intended Separation of the *Iſraelites* from other Nations, and appointed for its ſake, it muſt be underſtood as expiring of courſe, when that Separation was to have an End. And that this Separation was not *always* to laſt, Prophecy is clear and expreſs. For *Malachi* ſays, *From the Riſing of the Sun even unto the Going down of the ſame, my Name ſhall be great among the* GENTILES, *and in* EVERY PLACE Incenſe *ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name ſhall be great among the* HEATHEN, *ſaith the Lord of Hoſts,*

Hoſts, Mal. i. 11. The *Jews* were God's *Peculiar*, as they were *ſeparated* from all other Nations to the Profeſſion of his true Religion and Worſhip. Wherefore, when all Nations were to be called to the Profeſſion of God's true Religion, *Separation* and *Peculiarity* could no longer ſtand; and ſuch a State of things this Prophecy foreſhews. For whereas by the *Jewiſh* Law their Offerings and Sacrifices were appointed to be brought to *one* Place, *viz.* the Tabernacle, or the Temple; it is here ſaid, that in *every* Place Incenſe ſhould be offered unto God's Name; meaning, not the *material* Incenſe, but the Incenſe of the *Heart*, which is here called a *pure Offering*. Accordingly we may obſerve, that *Prophecy* ſpeaks of *another* Covenant that was to come, *different* from that which was made at Mount *Sinai*. *Behold the Days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will make a* NEW *Covenant with the Houſe of Iſrael, and with the Houſe of Judah,* NOT ACCORDING TO *the Covenant which I made with their Fathers, when I took them by the Hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt—But this ſhall be the Covenant that I will make with the Houſe of Iſrael—I will put my Law in their inward*

ward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People—for I will forgive their Iniquity, and I will remember their Sin no more, Jer. xxxi. 31—35. The Difference between this new Covenant and that which was given by *Moses*, can hardly be mistaken. It was not a Law of external Rites, as *Moses's* Law *was*; but a Law of inward Purity and Holiness. It was not a Covenant for carnal Purification, or Remission as to legal Purposes or Effects; but it was a Covenant of full and perfect Reconciliation, which *Moses's* Law was *not*. Add to this, that Prophecy expressly foreshews the Cessation of the *Mosaic* Law. The Ark of the Covenant was the Center of the *Jewish* Worship; yet *Jeremy* foretells the Absence and utter Abolition of it. *In those Days they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more*, Jer. iii. 16. *Daniel* foretells the *Cessation of the Sacrifice and the Oblation*, Chap. ix. ver. 27. and *David* the Change of the *Levitical* Priesthood; for he speaks of a *Priest* that was to arise, not according to the

the Order of *Aaron*, but *after the Order of Melchiſedeck*, Pſal. cx. 4.

This Point will be farther cleared when we come to open the Character of the *Meſſiah* as deſcribed by the Prophets. In the mean time, the Correſpondence of all this with *Chriſt's* Pretenſions is moſt plain and viſible; who offered himſelf as the Miniſter of the Law of Righteouſneſs, and the Covenant of Reconciliation; and declared the whole Law of *Moſes* as *concluded* in himſelf. *The Hour cometh* (ſays he to the Woman of *Samaria*) *when ye ſhall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, worſhip the Father*; that is, when the true Worſhip of God ſhall not be confined to this or that particular Place or Country, but extended to all Places alike, as the following Verſe ſhews. *The Hour cometh and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him*, John iv. 21. 23. If all are *true Worſhippers* of God who *worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth*, it will follow, that the true Worſhip can have nothing farther to do with the Law or its Appointments;

pointments; but all ſuch true Worſhippers muſt be accepted, of whatever Place or Country they be. And this is what St. *Peter* expreſly aſſerts, *Acts* x. 34. *God is no Reſpecter of Perſons, but in* EVERY NATION *he that feareth him and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted.* How exactly does this agree with what I have juſt now cited from the Prophet *Malachi*, *In* EVERY *Place Incenſe ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering!* How perfectly does the Covenant eſtabliſhed by *Chriſt* correſpond with *Jeremiah's* new Covenant; *I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts!* Thus hath *Chriſt* (ſuppoſing him authorized of God to be the Publiſher of this new Covenant) *fulfilled* the Law. But it cannot be ſaid that he *deſtroyed* it; any more than it can be ſaid of any Perſon, that he deſtroys a *Garment* that is worn out and unfit for Uſe; or that he deſtroys a *Houſe* when it falls down by its own Weight.

And now we will go on with the Hiſtory of Prophecy, to ſee how it correſponds with the Suppoſition, that he was the Perſon appointed

pointed by God to introduce this new Covenant. That a great Prophet was to arise after *Moses*, he himself bears witness. For thus God speaks to him, *Deut.* xviii. 18, 19. *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and whosoever will not hearken unto my Words which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* This Prophet, we see, was to be one of their *Brethren:* Therefore of the Seed of *Jacob*, in whom the *Blessing* of *Abraham* rested, as has been shewn above; and from whose Family, *Balaam* about the same time propheſied, that a *Star* and a *Scepter* should arise; or (as it is expressed a Verse or two after) one that should have *Dominion.* From this time we hear no more of the Promise, till after the Settlement of the *Israelites* in the Land of *Canaan*, and the kingly Government was set up, when we find an everlasting Kingdom established in the Family of *David:* For thus God speaks to him by the Prophet *Nathan*; *When thy Days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy Fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy Bowels,*

Bowels, and I will eſtabliſh his Kingdom—FOR EVER. 2 *Sam.* vii. 12, 13. It will be remembered, that among the Sons of *Jacob*, *Judah* (from whom *David* ſprang) had the Pre-eminence; this therefore was confirming the Promiſe to *Judah*. And that *David* underſtood it in this Senſe, is clear from what we meet with 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 4, 5. where, referring to this Promiſe made to him by *Nathan*, he ſays; *The Lord God of Iſrael choſe me before all the Houſe of my Father, to be King over Iſrael* FOR EVER: *For he hath choſen Judah to be* THE RULER; *and of the Houſe of Judah the Houſe of my Father; and among the Sons of my Father he liked* ME *to make me King over all Iſrael; and of all my Sons he hath choſen Solomon my Son to ſit upon the Throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Iſrael.* This Paſſage has a manifeſt Reference to the Promiſe made to *Judah*, Gen. xlix ℣ 8. *Judah, thou art he whom thy Brethren ſhall praiſe; thy Hand ſhall be in the Neck of thine Enemies; thy Father's Children ſhall bow down before thee*; and it is plain that *David* here conſiders this *Preference* given to *Judah*, as the Reaſon why God choſe him

and his Son *Solomon* to be Ruler over *Israel*; which was challenging to be *Judah's* Heir in reſpect of this Promiſe. But this Promiſe (as has been ſhewn above) comprehends the Promiſe of that *Seed* which was to be *a Bleſſing to all Nations*; which is indeed the principal Part of it; for as to the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, all the Sons of *Jacob* had a Share in it, although the reſt were to ſubmit, and did now ſubmit, to *Judah*, as Subjects to their temporal King. It is neceſſary therefore to underſtand that the Kingdom of the *Redeemer* was now ſettled in the Family of *David*; and this will beſt agree with the Style and Title of an *everlaſting* Kingdom, which is here and in other Places given to it. The temporal Kingdom of *David* was but of ſhort Continuance when compared with many other Kingdoms in point of Duration, and has long ago had its Period. But his *ſpiritual* Kingdom, or the Kingdom of the *Redeemer*, knows no Period: For it ſhall continue to the End and Conſummation of all things.

But

But of what Nature the Kingdom eſtabliſhed in *David* was, we ſhall beſt learn by laying together ſome other Paſſages of Scripture which relate to the ſame Subject. If we look into the Context we ſhall find, that *David's* Intention to *build an Houſe for the Habitation of the God of Jacob* occaſioned this Promiſe by *Nathan.* But this Work, by the expreſs Appointment of God, was reſerved for *Solomon*, who, when he brought up the Ark into the Temple which he had built, thus addreſſes himſelf to God; *Ariſe, O Lord, into thy Reſt, thou and the Ark of thy Strength—For thy Servant David's Sake turn not away the Face of thine Anointed. The Lord hath ſworn in Truth unto David, he will not turn from it; Of the Fruit of thy Body will I ſet upon thy Throne.—For the Lord hath choſen Zion, he hath deſired it for his Habitation. This is my Reſt for ever, here will I dwell, for I have deſired it.—There will I make the* HORN *of David to* BUD, *I have ordained a* LAMP *for mine* ANOINTED. *Pſal.* xxxii. 8, *& ſeq.* There is no Paſſage in *David's* Life, but the Promiſe made to him by *Nathan,*

than, which contains any ſuch *Oath* as is here mentioned. This therefore muſt be the Paſſage referred to. And what does *Solomon* expect in conſequence of this Promiſe? Why, that a great Prince ſhould ariſe in after times, whom he ſtyles the ANOINTED, *i. e.* the MESSIAH, and a BUD from *the Horn* of *David*. I ſay, in *after* times was this great Perſon to come; for the Language runs in the future Tenſe, *There* WILL *I make the Horn of David to bud.* To ſtrengthen this Interpretation let it be obſerved, that the ſame Perſon is ſpoken of both by *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah*, under the Title of the BRANCH, which we know is only a BUD expanded to its full natural Growth. *Iſaiah* prophecied above a hundred Years after the Death of *Solomon*; and he, ſpeaking yet of times to come, ſays, *There ſhall come forth a* ROD *out of the Stem of Jeſſe, and a* BRANCH *ſhall grow out of his Roots, and the* SPIRIT OF THE LORD *ſhall reſt upon him—with Righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity for the Meek of the Earth; and he ſhall ſmite the Earth with the Rod of his Mouth, and with the Breath of his Lips ſhall he ſlay*

the

the Wicked. Iſaiah xi. 1—5. And a little lower in the ſame Chapter, *In that Day there ſhall be a* ROOT *of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an Enſign of the People; to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek, and his Reſt ſhall be glorious.* Again, Chap. ix. ver. 6, 7. *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the Government ſhall be upon his Shoulder; and his Name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, The mighty God, The everlaſting Father* [or the Father of the Age] *The Prince of Peace. Of the Increaſe of his Government and Peace there ſhall be no End, upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it and to eſtabliſh it with Judgment and with Juſtice from henceforth even for ever.* Once more, Chap. lv. ver. 3, 4, 5. *I will make an* EVERLASTING *Covenant with you, even the* SURE MERCIES of *David. Behold I have given him* [*i. e.* the Heir of this Promiſe] *for a Witneſs to the People; a Leader and Commander to the People. Behold, thou ſhalt call a Nation that thou knoweſt not, and Nations that knew not thee, ſhall run unto thee, becauſe of the Lord thy God, and for the holy One of Iſrael.* Now hear what *Jeremiah* ſays,

who propheſied yet later than *Iſaiah*. *Behold the Days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous* BRANCH, *and a King ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute Judgment and Juſtice in the Earth; and this is his Name whereby he ſhall be called,* THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. *Jer.* xxiii. 5, 6.

There is no one who reads theſe Paſſages, who will not perceive, that they all relate to one and the ſame Perſon, to wit, the BRANCH that was to ſpring from *David*, and to be the Heir of the everlaſting Kingdom: And from the ſeveral Particulars here mentioned we may be able to fix his Character. For 1. He was to be a *Prophet* as well as King. *The Spirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him.* And in this the Character agrees with what God ſaid to *Moſes*, *I will raiſe them up a* PROPHET *from among their Brethren*, &c. 2. He was to be OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, *i. e.* he was to work for us Peace and Reconciliation with God; a Character by much too great for any mere temporal Prince, and which ſuits THAT SEED only which was to *bruiſe the Serpent's*

Serpent's Head. 3. He was to be the Author of a new Covenant, by which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* ſhould become the People of God. He *ſhall ſtand for an Enſign of the People, to it ſhall the* GENTILES *ſeek—thou ſhalt call a Nation that thou knoweſt not, and Nations that knew not thee, ſhall turn unto thee. I will give thee* (ſays the ſame, *Iſaiah* Chap. xlix. ver. 6.) *for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be* MY SALVATION *unto the End of the Earth.* And this again agrees with the Promiſe made to *Abraham, In thee ſhall all the Families of the Earth be bleſſed.*

It was in virtue of theſe Promiſes, that it became ſo fixed a Point among the *Jews*, in our Saviour's time, that no one called it in queſtion, that the Meſſiah was to be of *David's* Race; and thoſe who received *Jeſus* as the Meſſiah, received him as the BRANCH promiſed to *David*, as appears from *Zechariah's* Prophecy upon the Circumciſion of *John* the Baptiſt, *Luke* i. 68, 69. 78. *Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, for he hath viſited and redeemed his Peo-*

ple; and hath raiſed up an Horn of Salvation for us in the Houſe of his Servant David, as he ſpake by the Mouth of his holy Prophets, which have been ſince the World began—to give Knowledge of Salvation unto his People, through the Remiſſion of their Sins; through the tender Mercy of our God, whereby the Day-ſpring from on high [or the BRANCH] *hath viſited us, to give Light to them that ſit in Darkneſs and in the Shadow of Death, to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace.* This prophetic Speech contains the principal Characters of *David's* BRANCH, as given by the old Prophets, *viz.* his being to us the Author of *Redemption* and *Salvation*, and his *ſpeaking Peace*, and giving *Light* to the *Gentile* World; to ſhew us how exactly the Spirit of Prophecy agreed with itſelf, both in the earlier and later times of the *Jewiſh* Church.—But let us return again to the ancient Prophets, and ſee what can be gathered farther to ſtrengthen our Saviour's Pretenſions to be the Perſon foretold by Prophecy.

Daniel

Daniel was cotemporary with *Jeremiah*, and propheſied at the time of the *Babyloniſh* Captivity. He ſpeaks of a MESSIAH yet to come, who was to *make* RECONCILIATION *for Iniquity*, *and bring in* EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS; who was to *confirm the Covenant*, and *cauſe the Sacrifice and the Oblation* (*i. e.* the *Jewiſh* Sacrifices, with that whole Oeconomy which depended upon them) *to ceaſe*; and thereby break down that Wall of Partition which ſtood between *Jew* and *Gentile*, to make of both one People, *Dan.* ix. 24. After the Return of the *Jews* from the Captivity, *Zechariah* propheſies of a *King of Jeruſalem*, who was to come, *juſt and* HAVING SALVATION, who ſhould *ſpeak Peace unto the Heathen*; whoſe *Dominion* ſhould *be—unto the Ends of the Earth*, Zech. ix. 9, 10. After him *Haggai* foretells one to come, whom he ſtyles THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS, *Hag.* ii. 6. And laſtly *Malachi*, of one whom he ſtyles THE LORD WHOM YE SEEK, and

THE

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT *whom ye delight in*, who was to *purify the Sons of Levi, that* they might *offer unto the Lord an Offering* IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, *Mal.* iii. 1, &c. Of *what* Covenant does *Malachi* ſpeak? Not of the temporal Covenant, the Miniſter of which was already come, and had been dead many Ages before. He muſt mean therefore the *ſpiritual* Covenant; *that* Covenant of which *Jeremy* ſpeaks, Chap. xxxi. 31. as above cited: *Behold, the Days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will make a* NEW COVENANT *with the Houſe of Iſrael and with the Houſe of Judah, not according to the Covenant which I made with their Fathers, when I took them by the Hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt.* And obſerve how the Deſcription of this Covenant agrees, as ſet down by both Prophets. *Jeremy* ſays—*I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, and will be their God and they ſhall be my People; for I will forgive their Iniquity*, &c. which is the ſame thing, in other Words, with what *Malachi* ſays—*He ſhall purify*

purify the Sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteouſneſs; for they only can offer unto the Lord *ſuch* an Offering, in whoſe Hearts God writes his Law, and whoſe Sins and Iniquities he no more remembers. And who but the Meſſenger of this Covenant ſhould be *Haggai's* Deſire of all Nations? Who but he that ſhould ſpeak Peace unto the Heathen, in the Language of *Zachary?* Who but he could be *Daniel's* MESSIAH? If *Malachi's* MESSENGER had a *Covenant* to eſtabliſh; ſo had *Daniel's* MESSIAH; and the Covenant was one and the ſame; for it was *to finiſh Tranſgreſſion, to make an End of Sin, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting Righteouſneſs.* The Unity of Character that runs through all theſe Prophecies, ſhews that the ſame Perſon was intended in all; and the Hiſtory of *Jeſus Chriſt*, recorded to us in the New Teſtament, ſhews as plainly their Accompliſhment in HIM.

Nor is Prophecy leſs clear in fixing both the *Place* where this great Perſon was to be

be born—the *Time* of his Coming, and—the particular *Method* by which he was to work our Salvation. As to the firſt, the *Place* of his Nativity, *Micah* ſays, *But thou Bethleem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thouſands of Judea, yet out of thee ſhall come forth unto me* [He] *that is to be Ruler in Iſrael, whoſe Goings forth have been of old, from everlaſting*, Mic. v. 2. That is to ſay, "Thou *Beth-*"*leem*, though in point of civil Rank and "Dignity thou art ſmall, and of no Repu-"tation; yet ſhall this Defect hereafter be "abundantly ſupplied, by the Honour thou "ſhalt have of giving birth to one that is to "be Ruler in *Iſrael*," &c. Of whom does the Prophet ſpeak? Some ſay of *Zorobabel*. But (other Reaſons omitted) there were other Rulers as great or greater than he; and how comes it to paſs that HE alone ſhould be thought of among all the reſt as doing ſuch eminent Honour to the Place of his Nativity? Laſtly, the following Characters will not agree—*Whoſe Goings forth have been of old, from everlaſt-*

ing

ing—and he ſhall be great unto the Ends of the Earth, ver. 4. Which way ſoever you underſtand the Phraſe, *whoſe Goings forth have been of old*, &c. whether that the Original of his *Being* was from everlaſting, or that he was *foretold* from of old, from the Beginning of the World; the Deſcription will in no ſort ſuit *Zorobabel*; nor was *he* ever *great unto the Ends of the Earth*, as it is here foretold this Ruler ſhould be. But if you apply the whole to the *Meſſiah*, the *righteous Branch* of *David*, the *Meſſenger of the Covenant* (whoſe future Coming this very Prophet, as we have ſeen elſewhere, foreſhews) all will be eaſy, and it will evidently appear how exactly this Prophecy was accompliſhed in *Chriſt*. Which Accompliſhment is ſo much the more remarkable, as it ſeems to have been owing to a particular Deſignation of Providence. For, as we all well remember, our Saviour's Parents did not dwell at *Bethleem*, but at *Nazareth*; from whence as they were travelling through *Bethleem* upon an extraordinary Occaſion, *Jeſus* was there born.

The

The *Time* when this great Perſon was to appear, is a very material Circumſtance to be conſidered; and this is plainly ſettled by Prophecy. *Haggai* and *Malachi* have both foretold that he ſhould appear in the ſecond Temple. For thus the former; *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the Heavens, and the Earth, and the Sea, and the dry Land; and I will ſhake all Nations, and* THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME, *and I will fill this Houſe with Glory, ſaith the Lord.—The Glory of this latter Houſe ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts,* Hag. ii. 6, &c. The *Jews* were now rebuilding their Temple, which had been deſtroyed by the *Babylonians* when they were carried into Captivity. But this Temple fell ſo far ſhort of the firſt Temple that was built by *Solomon*, in point of Magnificence of Structure and Richneſs of Ornaments, that, as we read *Ezra* iii. 12. *many of the Prieſts and Levites, and chief of the Fathers who were ancient Men, that had ſeen the firſt Houſe, when the Foundation of this Houſe was laid*

before

before their Eyes, wept with a loud Voice. And this Circumſtance *Haggai* takes notice of as the Introduction to his Prophecy. *Who is left among you that ſaw this Houſe in her firſt Glory? And how do you ſee it now? Is it not in your Eyes in compariſon of it, as nothing?* ℣ 3. To comfort them therefore he tells them, that, this notwithſtanding, this ſecond Temple ſhould be more glorious than the firſt; and this being immediately connected to the Promiſe, that *the Deſire of all Nations* (whom we have proved to be the *Meſſiah*) *ſhall come*, it ſhews plainly the Senſe to be, that he, by *his Preſence* in this Houſe, ſhould derive upon it this *greater Glory* above the former Temple, to which, in itſelf, it was far inferior. It is an Addreſs exactly of the ſame kind with that which was offered in reſpect of the *Place* of our Saviour's Nativity, and juſt now mentioned; *But thou Bethleem, though thou be little among the thouſands of Judah, yet out of thee ſhall come forth he that is to be Ruler in Iſrael.* But what *Haggai's* Words imply, that *Malachi* expreſly aſſerts. THE LORD WHOM

YE

YE SEEK, *ſhall ſuddenly* COME INTO HIS TEMPLE, even THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT *whom ye delight in; behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Mal. iii. 1. But *Daniel* is yet more preciſe; *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City; to finiſh the Tranſgreſſion, to ſeal up Sins, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting Righteouſneſs, and to ſeal up the Viſion and Prophecy, and to anoint the moſt holy. Know therefore and underſtand, that* FROM *the going forth of the Commandment to build Jeruſalem again* UNTO *Meſſiah the Prince, ſhall be ſeven Weeks, and threeſcore and two Weeks.* The whole Period of this Prophecy comprehends ſeventy Weeks, computing from the *going forth of the Commandment to build Jeruſalem.* But from this Date unto the *Meſſiah* there was to be but *ſeven Weeks, and threeſcore and two Weeks*, that is, ſixty nine Weeks. The Queſtion is, what the Prophet means by Weeks. He does not mean Weeks of Days; for within this Period nothing can be aſſigned which will at all anſwer to the

Matters

Matters contained in this Prophecy. But the *Jews* had another ſort of Week by which they reckoned, and that was a Week of Years. This is evident from *Levit.* xxv. 8. *And thou ſhalt number ſeven Sabbaths of Years unto thee, ſeven times ſeven Years; and the Space of the ſeven Sabbaths of Years ſhall be unto thee forty and nine Years.* It is thus that the *Jews* were taught to compute their Jubile; and thus that *Daniel* computes the great Jubile of all, the Coming of the Meſſiah. Sixty nine of theſe Weeks make a Period of 483 Years; and if you reckon from the 7th of *Artaxerxes* the *Perſian* King, when he ſent down *Ezra*, by a Decree, to reſtore and re-eſtabliſh the *Jewiſh* State, it will be found juſt ſo many Years to the Beginning of *John* the Baptiſt's preaching, who opened the Kingdom of the Meſſiah. There are other ways of reckoning this; but I think it ſufficient to mention one, for they all come at laſt to the ſame Concluſion. The Prophecy ſays, that after ſixty nine Weeks were completed, the Meſſiah ſhould *confirm the Covenant with many for one Week.* This *one Week* includes the whole

Period of the Baptiſt's and our Saviour's Preaching, to the time of his Death, which was juſt ſeven Years; and with this the *ſeventy Weeks* were completed. But it ſhould be obſerved, what the Prophet foretells ſhould happen after the ſeventy Weeks were ended, and this was the utter Diſſolution of the *Jewiſh* Commonwealth, before which Event *Jacob's* Prophecy aſſures us, that *Shiloh* was to come. *The Scepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come.* Gen. xlix. 10. Till *Chriſt* came *Judah* had his Scepter and his Lawgiver; which departed from him ſoon after, when, according to *Daniel's* Prediction, their Polity was diſſolved by the *Roman* Power, and their City and their Temple laid in Aſhes. *The People of the Prince that ſhall come, ſhall deſtroy the City and the Sanctuary, and the End thereof ſhall be with a Flood, and unto the End of the War Deſolations are determined.* Dan. ix. 29.

Laſtly, the particular *Method* by which the Meſſiah ſhould accompliſh his Work, Prophecy foreſhews, ſhould be by offering himſelf

himſelf up as a SACRIFICE for Sin. *Daniel* is expreſs that the Meſſiah was to be *cut off, not for himſelf, but to make Reconciliation for Iniquity*, Dan. ix. 24. 26. which agrees with what *Iſaiah* ſays of one whom he ſtyles the SERVANT of the Lord, Chap. liii. ver. 4, 5, 6. *Surely he hath born our Griefs and carried our Sorrows—He was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our Iniquities, the Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed. All we like Sheep have gone aſtray—and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all.* Again, ver. 10, 11. *When thou ſhalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin—ſhall my righteous Servant juſtify many, for he ſhall bear their Iniquities.* Of whom (may I aſk again) does the Prophet ſpeak? His Characters will ſhew him. It was he who was to *grow up as a tender Plant, and as a* ROOT *out of a dry Ground*, ver. 2. It was he who was to *ſprinkle many Nations*, and at whom *Kings ſhould ſhut their Mouths*, Chap. lii. ver. 15. It was he whoſe Goings forth have been of old, from everlaſting; for *who ſhall declare his Generation?* Chap.

liii. ver. 8. It was he who was to have *a Portion with the Great, and divide the Spoil with the Strong*, ver. 12. In fine, it is THAT Servant of God who is ſpoken of by the ſame Prophet, Chap. xlii. 1—4. *Behold my Servant whom I uphold; mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth, he ſhall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles— He ſhall not fail till he hath ſet Judgment in the Earth, and the Iſles ſhall wait for his Law. I will give thee for a* COVENANT *to the People, for a* LIGHT *to the Gentiles.* But theſe are the Characters of *David's* BRANCH, the Heir of the *everlaſting* Kingdom, as exhibited in the *Old* Teſtament; theſe the Characters of JESUS CHRIST, as exemplified in the *New*.

I might mention, that there is ſcarce a remarkable Action, or Circumſtance of our Saviour's Life, which is not pointed out by Prophecy. His Birth of a *Virgin* was foretold by *Iſaiah*, Chap. vii. 14. His Riding into *Jeruſalem* upon an *Aſs*, by *Zechariah*, Chap. ix. ver. 9. His being ſold for *thirty Pieces of Silver*, by the ſame Prophet, Chap. xi. ver. 12. That he ſhould be

be *ſcourged*, *buffetted*, and *ſpit* upon, by *Iſaiah*, Chap. l. ver. 6. The *piercing* his *Hands and* his *Feet*, by the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. xxii. 16. The giving him *Gall* to *eat* and *Vinegar* to *drink*, by the ſame Writer, *Pſal.* lxix. 21. His meek and patient Suffering under all theſe Indignities, by *Iſaiah*, Chap. xlii. ver. 2, 3. and Chap. l. 6. and Chap. liii. 7. The *caſting Lots* upon his Garment, by the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. xxii. 18. It is to be confeſſed, that ſeveral of theſe Prophecies now referred to had, in their primary Intention, reſpect to ſome nearer Events in which they received their Completion. But they are not for that to be rejected, as not foreſhewing *Jeſus Chriſt*. For when it is conſidered, that the Prophets under the Law were ſo far Miniſters of the new and better Covenant, as to foreſhew its future Accompliſhment (of which the many Prophecies already produced, and which ſpeak of the Meſſiah and of him ONLY, is undeniable Proof) it is not at all unreaſonable to be ſuppoſed, that the Spirit by which theſe Prophets were directed, ſhould, in *ſimilar* Matters, have had the more diſtant as well as the nearer Events in

view, and have made uſe of ſuch Expreſſions as are deſcriptive of both; and there is the higheſt Probability that this was the caſe, when ever Prophecies run in ſuch Terms, as are more ſtrictly and literally applicable to the more diſtant Event than to the nearer, in which they are ſuppoſed to have had their *primary* Completion. Thus when *Iſaiah* ſays, *Behold a Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a Son, and ſhall call his Name* IMMANUEL; though the firſt Intention of this Prophecy was to ſhew, that a Son ſhould be born to the Prophet of a Woman, who was a Virgin at the time when the Prophecy was given, and this to be a *Sign* to the Houſe of *David*, that GOD would be WITH THEM, and ſpeedily deliver them from the Hands of *Rezin* King of *Syria*, and *Pekah* King of *Iſrael*, who had combined together for their Deſtruction; yet when we ſee the Son of *David* himſelf, the Heir of the everlaſting Covenant, who is in the moſt complete Senſe IMMANUEL, or GOD WITH US, born of a Woman who had not known Man (which is literally and properly to be born of a Virgin) one can ſcarce help concluding,

cluding, that this Event was not only intended, but the thing *principally* intended, by the Spirit of Prophecy. Again; when the Pſalmiſt ſays, *All they that ſee me laugh me to ſcorn, they ſhoot out the Lip, and ſhake the Head, ſaying, He truſted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him ſeeing he delighted in him—they pierced my Hands and my Feet—they gave me Gall for my Meat, and when I was thirſty they gave me Vinegar to drink—they part my Garment among them, and caſt Lots upon my Veſture*; what can we think of it? It does not appear from any part of *David's* Hiſtory, that He ſuffered ſuch things, but *Chriſt*, we know, did. You will ſay, perhaps, that theſe are but figurative Expreſſions, importing great Indignities and Calamities. Be it ſo. But how came *David* to chuſe ſuch Figures, among the great Variety that might poſſibly have occurred to his Mind, as *literally* expreſs what *Chriſt* afterwards ſuffered? Did this happen by chance? You will be the leſs diſpoſed to think ſo when you conſider, that *David* is treated in Scripture as the *Repreſentative* of *Chriſt*, and *that* is ſaid of *David*

vid which could not be true of *David*, but was verified in *Chriſt*. Thus, *Hoſ.* iii. 5. *In the latter Days Iſrael ſhall return and ſeek David their King.* Jer. xxx. 9. *They ſhall ſerve the Lord and David their King, whom I will raiſe up unto them.* Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. *I will ſet one Shepherd over them, even my Servant David—and David ſhall be a Prince over them.* All theſe Prophets lived long after *David*; and therefore in all theſe Places the Word *David* muſt mean the Meſſiah, who was yet to ſpring from *David*. Now if *David* means *Chriſt*, why may not the *Sufferings* of *David* mean the *Sufferings* of *Chriſt*? Or if other Prophets ſpake of *Chriſt* in the *Perſon* of *David*; why might not *David* ſpeak of *Chriſt* in *his own* Perſon? This Obſervation will juſtify the Application of many Paſſages in the Book of *Pſalms* to *Chriſt's* Hiſtory, and in particular that famous Paſſage in the xvi^th^ Pſalm, ver. 9, 10. which the Writers of the New Teſtament have treated as a Prophecy of *Chriſt's* Reſurrection: *Therefore my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth; my Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in Hope. For thou wilt not leave my Soul*

in

in Hell; *neither wilt thou ſuffer thine holy One to ſee Corruption.* Upon which Words St. *Peter* thus reaſons, *Acts* ii. 29, 30, 31. *Men and Brethren, let me freely ſpeak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this Day*; *therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had ſworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Fleſh, he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit on his Throne*; *he ſeeing this before, ſpake of the Reſurrection of* CHRIST, *that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Fleſh did ſee Corruption.* To the ſame Purpoſe (but more briefly) St. *Paul*, Chap. xiii. ver. 36, 37. *David, after he had ſerved his own Generation, by the Will of God, fell on ſleep, and ſaw Corruption*; *but he whom God raiſed again, ſaw no Corruption.* And if *David* ſo deſcribed his own *Sufferings*, as at the ſame time to foreſhew the Sufferings of *Chriſt*; why might he not ſo deſcribe his own *Hopes*, as at the ſame time to foreſhew the Reſurrection of *Chriſt*? There is this Reaſon (I ſay) to ſhew that he did ſo, that in no other way of Interpretation

pretation will the Senſe come up to the full Strength of the Expreſſion.

What has been ſaid of *ſecondary* Prophecies may as well be applied to *Types*, in reſpect of which the *Law* itſelf was nothing leſs than a Prophecy of *Chriſt*; and is ſo repreſented by our Saviour himſelf, *Matt.* xi. 13. *All the Prophets*, AND THE LAW *prophefied until John*. The ancient *Jews* very well underſtood the Manner of ſpeaking by *Types* and *Similitudes*, as may be proved by a Variety of Examples. I will mention but one, the Inſtitution of the *Paſſover*, which, in the ſeveral Circumſtances of its Appointment, was a Type of their Deliverance out of the Land of *Egypt*. Now if things *paſt* may be repreſented by Types; why not, as well, things *to come*? Or if the Prophets did foreſhew many Events relating to the temporal Covenant by Types and Similitudes (which is a Fact not to be diſputed) why might not other Matters or Events which pertained to the ſpiritual Covenant be foreſhewn in the ſame manner? The temporal Covenant was, in the Nature of it, the Introduction to a new and a better Hope,

Hope, which ſtood as its End and Completion; and when we conſider the ſeveral Appointments under the Law, and ſee in many of them a manifeſt Reſemblance to what happened under the Goſpel Diſpenſation; what can we conclude, but that the one was intended to ſhadow out the other? Let any one read the Ceremonial of the *Scape Goat*, which was to be performed yearly upon the great Day of Expiation, when the Prieſt was to make an Atonement for the Sins of all the People, as it ſtands *Levit.* xvi. 21, 22. He is there ordered to take *two Goats, and preſent them before the Lord.* Upon the Head of one of them the High Prieſt was to *lay his Hands, and confeſs over him all the Iniquities of the Children of Iſrael*—PUTTING THEM UPON THE HEAD *of the Goat.* After this he was to be *let looſe into the Wilderneſs*, and it is ſaid, *the Goat ſhall* BEAR UPON HIM *all their Iniquities unto a Land not inhabited.* Let any one, I ſay, read this, and compare it with what *Jeremiah* ſays the Meſſiah ſhould do, *viz.* that he ſhould BEAR our *Griefs*, our *Sorrows*, our *Iniquities*; and that God would LAY UPON

UPON HIM *the Iniquities of us all*; and let him try whether he can perſuade himſelf, that nothing was meant by this, but a mere Ceremony. The like may be ſaid of the *Paſchal Lamb*, and in ſhort of all the bloody Sacrifices under the Law; the Reaſon of which it will be very difficult to explain, without ſuppoſing them to have been intended as Types and Shadows of that *great Sacrifice*, that was to be offered up for the Sins of the World. And when it is perceived in theſe and in other Appointments of the Law (and the Event will always ſhew it) that there was a typical Meaning in them referable to the Goſpel Diſpenſation, they will be as truly *Prophecies* of *Chriſt*, as Prophecies expreſſed by Words and Sentences are.

But as the Compaſs allowed me is but narrow, I have not time to enter minutely into theſe things, but muſt refer ſuch as deſire farther Satisfaction, to thoſe who have written profeſſedly upon the Subject of Prophecy; from whom I have taken juſt ſo much as I judged ſufficient for my preſent Purpoſe, which is to ſhew, that throughout

throughout the whole Old Teſtament there are Notices given of a great Prophet to come, who ſhould bring Salvation to all Nations and People; and that theſe Notices do all of them centre in our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

But it will be objected, that though Prophecy in many reſpects agrees with the Character of *Chriſt*, yet in ſome reſpects it doth not agree; for

1. Thoſe ſame Prophets, which foreſhew that under the Kingdom of the Meſſiah the *Gentiles* ſhould be called in to be the People of God, do alſo foreſhew the *Reſtoration* and *Re-eſtabliſhment* of the *Jewiſh* Nation, who are to be recalled from their ſeveral Diſperſions, and be made again one People under *Meſſiah* their King. Thus *Iſaiah*, Chap. xi. after he had ſaid, *In that Day there ſhall be a Root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an Enſign to the People, to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek*—preſently adds—*and it ſhall come to paſs in that Day, that the Lord ſhall ſet his Hand the ſecond time to recover the Remnant of his People which*

which ſhall be left, from Aſſyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cuſh, &c.—*and ſhall aſſemble the Outcaſts of Iſrael, and gather together the diſperſed of Judah from the four Corners of the Earth.* So likewiſe Chap. xlix. ver. 6. theſe two Events are joined together in the ſame Prophecy; *It is a light thing that thou ſhouldeſt be my Servant, to raiſe up the Tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the Preſerved of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a Light to the Gentiles,* &c. So again, *Jeremiah,* Chap. xxiii. ver. 5—9. *Behold the Days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous* BRANCH, *&c. in his Days Judah ſhall be ſaved, and Iſrael ſhall dwell ſafely—and they ſhall no more ſay, The Lord liveth which brought up the Children of Iſrael out of the Land of Egypt; but The Lord liveth which brought up, and which led the Seed of the Houſe of Iſrael out of the North Country, and from all Countries whither I had driven them, and they ſhall dwell in their own Land.* But moſt fully the Prophet *Ezekiel,* Chap. xxxvii. ver. 21—26. *Behold I will take the Children of Iſrael from among the Heathen—and will gather*

gather them on every ſide, and bring them into their own Land; and I will make them one Nation in the Land—and one King ſhall be King to them all—they ſhall not any more defile themſelves with their Idols—but I will ſave them out of all their Dwelling-places, wherein they have ſinned, and will cleanſe them, ſo ſhall they be my People and I will be their God. And David my Servant [*i. e.* the Meſſiah] *ſhall be King over them, and they ſhall have one Shepherd; they ſhall alſo walk in my Judgments, and obſerve my Statutes and do them; and they ſhall dwell in the Land that I have given unto Jacob my Servant, wherein your Fathers have dwelt, and they ſhall dwell therein, even they and their Children, and their Children's Children, for ever; and my Servant David ſhall be their Prince for ever.* Theſe Paſſages (and more there are in the Old Teſtament to the ſame effect) are very expreſs; and that the *Jews* underſtood them as containing the Promiſe of a *temporal* Reſtoration, is manifeſt from the Queſtion which the Apoſtles put to our Saviour, *Acts* i. 6. *Lord, wilt thou at this time* RESTORE *again* THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?

ISRAEL? But nothing at all of this hath happened.

2. Prophecy foreſhews ſuch a State of *Peace* and *Tranquillity* under the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, as we or our Forefathers have never ſeen. Thus the Pſalmiſt, *In his Days* [*i. e.* in the Days of the Meſſiah] *ſhall the Righteous flouriſh, and abundance of Peace ſo long as the Moon endureth*, Pſal. lxxii. 7. So *Iſaiah*, Chap. ii. ver. 4. *He* [the Meſſiah] *ſhall judge among the Nations, and rebuke many People; and they ſhall beat their Swords into Plough-ſhares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks. Nation ſhall not lift up Sword againſt Nation, neither ſhall they learn War any more.* Again, Chap. xi. ver. 6. *The Wolf ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lye down with the Kid; and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child ſhall lead them; and the Cow and the Bear ſhall feed; their young ones ſhall lie down together; and the Lion ſhall eat Straw like the Ox; and the ſucking Child ſhall play on the Hole of the Aſp; and the weaned Child ſhall put his Hand upon the Cockatrice Den;*

Den; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy Mountain; for the Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.

To all this the Answer is short and plain, *viz.* That though these Prophecies have not been accomplished by any thing we have yet seen, nothing hinders but that they may hereafter be accomplished. Here are two great Events plainly connected together by Prophecy, *viz.* the Coming in of the *Fulness* of the *Gentiles*, and the *Restoration* of the Twelve Tribes of *Israel*; and the *peaceable* times are to be subsequent to these Events. For thus *Isaiah*, *It shall come to pass in the last Days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the Top of the Mountains*—*and* ALL NATIONS *shall flow unto it; and many People shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his Ways, and we will walk in his Paths; and he shall judge among the Nations, and shall rebuke many People*—and THEN it

was that they ſhould *beat their Swords into Plow-ſhares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks*, &c. Now as it is only ſaid, that theſe things ſhall happen in *the laſt* Days [*i. e.* under the Kingdom of the Meſſiah] but no particular Period of that Kingdom is marked out by Prophecy, we are at liberty *yet* to wait for their Accompliſhment, and ſo much the rather, becauſe the ſame Spirit of Prophecy, under the New Teſtament, *directs* us to expect it. It is evident (as I have juſt now obſerved) from the Queſtion which the Apoſtles put to our Saviour, that they (in common with the reſt of the *Jews*) expected the *Reſtoration* of *the Kingdom to Iſrael.* And what ſays our Saviour in anſwer? *It is not for* YOU *to know the Times or the Seaſons which the Father hath put in his own Power.* Acts i. 7. In which Words *Chriſt* doth not ſay, that there ſhould *not* be any ſuch Reſtoration; he rather ſuppoſes that there *ſhould*, and only tells them, that the Time *when* was not a matter fit for them to enquire after. But St. *Paul* is expreſs, that a time ſhall be when *the* FULNESS *of the Gentiles* ſhall *come in, and*

ALL ISRAEL *ſhall be ſaved.* Rom. xi. 25, 26. This Time we have not yet ſeen; but Ages to come may ſee it; and as, whenever theſe Events ſhall happen, they will introduce a great Change in the Face of things; that ſuch a general State of Peace and Tranquility will not thereupon enſue, as will juſtify thoſe Deſcriptions which the Prophets have given, is certainly more than Unbelievers are able to prove. Whether this *Reſtoration* of the Kingdom to *Iſrael* will be a *temporal* Government under the Meſſiah, or whether the flouriſhing State of the Church after their Converſion, is only adumbrated to us in the Writings of the Prophets under the Images of Temporal things, is a Queſtion about which we muſt be contented to be ignorant, till the Event explains it; and ſince we have ſeen ſo many Prophecies already verified in *Chriſt*, there is all the Reaſon in the World to believe, that the reſt will be accompliſhed in God's due Seaſon.

Upon the whole then, I hope I may have leave to conclude, that *Chriſt* is juſtified in

his Appeal to the Scriptures, as *teſtifying* of him. Recollect, for your Eaſe, the principal Points of the Evidence. Thus;

We find from the Beginning a Promiſe made, that *the Seed of the Woman* ſhould *bruiſe the Serpent's Head*; we find alſo a Promiſe made to *Abraham*, repeated to *Iſaac*, then to *Jacob*, and at laſt reſting in *Judah*; that *in* their *Seed*, *all the Families of the Earth* ſhould *be bleſſed*. What the *bruiſing* of the *Serpent's Head* by the *Woman's Seed* means; and how or in what Senſe the *Seed* of *Abraham* was to be a *Bleſſing to all Nations*, the Promiſes themſelves do not explain; but as the Work of *Jeſus Chriſt* (born of a Woman, and of the Seed of *Abraham*, through *Iſaac*, *Jacob*, and *Judah*) in reſtoring Immortality to all Mankind, which was loſt by that Tranſgreſſion into which our firſt Parents, ſeduced by the Serpent, fell, and thereby triumphing over the Serpent, who had triumphed over the whole Race of *Adam*; as, I ſay, this great Work is perfectly well deſcribed by thoſe Expreſſions, and we ſee nothing elſe of ſufficient

Importance

Importance to which they can be applied; we thence conclude, that this was the thing intended.

When we come down lower, we find the Senſe of Prophecy perfectly correſponding with this Interpretation. *Moſes* was ſent of God to the *Iſraelites*, and ſufficiently declares the End of his Miſſion to be, not to be a *Bleſſing to all Nations*, but to bring the Sons of *Jacob* out of *Egypt*, where they were held in Bondage, and put them into Poſſeſſion of the Land of *Canaan*, according to the Tenor of the Covenant made with *Abraham*. The Promiſe therefore of a *Bleſſing to all Nations* was not accompliſhed in *Moſes*, but remained to be accompliſhed in ſome other Perſon yet to come; and upon whom can we ſo naturally fix our Eyes, as upon that Prophet whom *Moſes* expreſly foretells God would *raiſe up* to the *Iſraelites from among their Brethren*, *i. e.* of the Seed of *Jacob*? *David* was the Son of *Jacob* by *Judah*, to whom the Promiſe of the *Bleſſing to all Nations* was limited; and to him a *Seed*, a *Branch* was promiſed,

who was to have an *everlaſting* Kingdom, and to be the Author of a *new* Covenant (ſo called in diſtinction from the Covenant given by *Moſes)* in which *all Nations* had an Intereſt. This Promiſe could not be accompliſhed in *Solomon*, nor in any of the Kings that ſucceeded him, to the time of the Captivity; for they were the Prophets who propheſied about that time, who ſpake of this Seed as yet to come; by various *Names* indeed, but under the *ſame Characters*, viz. of one who was to gather both *Jews* and *Gentiles* into one, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to be God's *Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth.* Here then we find that *Seed* which was to be *a Bleſſing to all Nations* at the *End* of the Old Teſtament, which we find at the *Beginning* of it ſet forth in his proper Character; and if you aſk the *Time* when he was to appear, it is ſo pinned down by Prophecy that there is no miſtaking it. It was to be after Seventy Weeks of Years were expired; it was to be whilſt the ſecond Temple was ſtanding, and before the Diſſolution of the *Jewiſh* Commonwealth. Within this Period

JESUS

JESUSCHRIST came and anſwered the prophetic Characters of him that *was* to come, in every Particular.

This is the Argument, in ſhort, which I am willing to ſubmit to every candid, impartial Judge. One thing you muſt have obſerved (and I am not unwilling it ſhould be obſerved) *viz.* that the clear underſtanding of theſe Prophecies is owing to the Events in which they have been accompliſhed; which is what St. *Peter* means, when he limits the *Obſcurity* of Prophecy by the following Words, UNTIL *the Day dawn, and the Day-Star ariſe in your Hearts*, 2 Pet. i. 19. Before the Event all Prophecy is obſcure. When the Event happens, and we can compare it with the Prophecy, Prophecy grows clear and plain. But the Senſe which ariſes upon this Compariſon, is not leſs the true Senſe becauſe the Event helps us to make it out. For the Event does not create the Senſe, but finds it; and it is in this, as it is in all other Caſes; if we do but know a Writer's Meaning, it is of

no Conſequence, as to any Uſe that may be made of it, how we come by it.

To make ſome Uſe then of what has been ſaid, it is an unconteſted Point, that theſe Prophecies were not given out *after* the Event; for the lateſt of the Prophets lived long before *Jeſus Chriſt*; and ſome of them were older than *Moſes*. The Prophecies themſelves were publickly known, and had been received among the *Jews* as the Oracles of God, from the Time of their Delivery. Now from hence it will follow, that the Coming of *Jeſus Chriſt* was *foreknown* either by the Prophets, or by that Spirit which directed the Prophets, and declared it by their Mouths. Take it which way you pleaſe, Prophecy will be a *Miracle* diſtinct from the Miracles wrought by *Chriſt* himſelf, and concurring with them to eſtabliſh his Authority, upon Suppoſition that the Miracles wrought by *Chriſt* are ſo circumſtanced, as to be a juſt, legitimate Evidence of a Prophet's Miſſion: I ſay, *upon this Suppoſition* Prophecy will be Evidence for *Chriſt*, but *not elſe*; if for no other Reaſon

ſon yet for this, that it was *one* of the Characters of the Meſſiah, that he was to be a *Prophet*, and conſequently to give the proper Evidence of a Prophet's Miſſion. But it may be added (and it is very neceſſary to be obſerved) that the Prophecies of the Meſſiah to come could have been no Evidence for *Chriſt*, without ſome *public Atteſtation* on the part of God that He was the true Perſon among the Variety that might poſſibly have made the ſame Pretenſions. During the Time of *Chriſt's* Miniſtry, any Perſon of the Family of *David*, and born at *Bethleem*, might have pretended that he was the *promiſed Seed*; and in ſuch a Caſe, if neither the one nor the other had wrought Miracles, nothing could have been concluded in favour of either. But *Chriſt* coming in the *Power of God*, left no room for Competition; and it appearing that the prophetic Characters agreed in him, it made the Evidence full and complete that THIS was HE. Therefore we may obſerve, that our Saviour in his Anſwer to the Baptiſt's Queſtion, who ſent to know whether he was the *Chriſt*, appeals

to

to his Miracles in the firſt place, as without which his Appeal to the Prophets could never ſtand. *Go and ſhew John again thoſe things which ye do hear and ſee: The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleanſed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raiſed up.* Matt. xi. 4, 5. And this was the Method which the Apoſtles followed in treating with the *Jews*, whom they ſent indeed to the Prophets, to be inſtructed that *Jeſus* was the *Chriſt*; but not without putting them in mind that he was *a Man* APPROVED *of God among them, by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did in the midſt of them*; particularly inſiſting upon his *Reſurrection* from the Dead, whereof they were ſent to be Witneſſes throughout the World, and which was the Epitome and Compendium of all the reſt. Conſult for this the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, *Chap.* ii. *ver.* 22, *&* *ſeq.* and in ſeveral other Places.

You ſee then how both Parts of the Evidence hang upon each other. *Chriſt* could not be received upon the foot of his own Miracles,

Miracles, without ſhewing in himſelf the Character of the Prophet that was foretold. He could not challenge to be received upon the Evidence of Prophecy, without the Evidence of his own Miracles. It was not that there was any *internal* Defect in either kind of Evidence that the other was to ſupply; but it was that Circumſtances *externally* were ſuch, that without the Concurrence of both, neither of them could properly be applied. In other Words; without *Chriſt's* own Miracles the Evidence of Prophecy would have ſtood *unconnected* with his Pretenſions; and without the Concurrence of the prophetic Characters, his Appeal to Prophecy could not have been juſtified. And therefore both kinds of Evidence were neceſſary.

I have ſtated this Matter as clearly as I am able; and there are two oppoſite Errors which hereby ſtand refuted.

1. One is the Opinion of thoſe who think, that "the Application of the moſt "direct and expreſs Prophecies, has not of "itſelf

" itſelf the Nature of a direct or poſitive " *Proof*; but can only be a *ſine qua non*; " an Application of certain Marks, *without* " *which* no Perſon could be the promiſed " Meſſiah." In other Words; " that the " Application of direct and expreſs Prophe- " cies to *Chriſt*, is nothing but ſuch a Con- " gruity of Marks or Characters, as removes " all *Objections*, by which an Adverſary " would endeavour to prove that he was " *not* He [d]." Surely this cannot be the Scripture Notion! For will any one ſay,

[d] I was ſurprized to find ſo able a Writer as Dr. *Clarke* fallen into this Notion. And yet the Words here recited are *his own*, as they ſtand *Evid. of Nat. and Rev. Rel.* p. 259. ed. 6. The Reaſon he gives for his Opinion is no other, than what has been obviated above; *viz.* " Many were of the Seed of *Abraham*, " of the Tribe of *Judah*, and of the Family of *David*, " and born in *Bethleem* of *Judea*, and ſuffered, and " were cut off; and yet neither *any* nor *all* of theſe " Characters could prove any Man to be the Meſſiah; " but the want of any one of them would prove, that any " Man was *not* he." I know not who theſe *many* were. But the Fact admitted, it is true that neither any, nor all of theſe Characters put together, are Evidence of *Chriſt's* being the Meſſiah, ſeparate from his Miracles; but, his Miracles ſuppoſed, they *become* Evidence, as has

that

that a Man is a *Witneſs* for him, becauſe he has nothing to *object* againſt him? But our Saviour ſays, that the Scriptures *teſtify of* him. The *Greek* is μαρτυρεῖν; the very Word which he uſes when, ſpeaking of his own Miracles, he ſays, [e] *The Works which I do in my Father's Name, they* BEAR WITNESS *of me*; and is indeed a Word of that Force, that the moſt direct and poſitive *Evidence* is not to be expreſſed by any ſtronger Term.

been explained. I cannot therefore ſubſcribe to what the Doctor ſays, upon the Queſtion put by our Saviour, *Luke* xxiv. 26. OUGHT NOT *Chriſt to have ſuffered theſe things*, &c. *viz.* that this "is not *proving* from "his Sufferings that *Jeſus* was the *Chriſt*, but remov-"ing the *Objection*, by which ſome were apt to infer "from his Sufferings, that he could not poſſibly be the "*Chriſt*." For by what Authority does he ſay this? For ought that appears to the contrary, our Saviour, in appealing to the Prophecies concerning the Sufferings of the Meſſiah, meant to take the full Advantage of them to himſelf, and therefore to cite them as *Evidence*, if in the Nature of the thing they are ſuch, as, under the Circumſtance above ſuppoſed, they have been proved to be.

[e] *John* x. 25.

2. The

2. The other is the Error of thoſe who firſt grounding the Senſe of Prophecy on *Chriſt's Authority*, as a divine Interpreter, afterwards bring Prophecy back as Evidence in ſupport of *Chriſt's* Miſſion; which is certainly a bad way of reaſoning. For to ſay, "I believe *Chriſt* to be a true Prophet, "on the Evidence of his Miracles;" and again, "I believe that the Prophecies are "truly applied to *Chriſt*, becauſe he who is "true hath ſo applied them;" quite deſtroys the *diſtinct* Evidence of Prophecy, and reſolves the whole into the Evidence of Miracles. In this way of reckoning *Chriſt* will eſtabliſh the Senſe of Prophecy, but Prophecy cannot eſtabliſh his Authority. Prophecy therefore, in order to make it a diſtinct Evidence, muſt have a Bottom of its own to ſtand upon; as in ordinary caſes to qualify a Man to be a Witneſs, he muſt have ſomething of his own to ſay. If two Men ſhould come into Court to give their Evidence, and the ſecond ſhould ſay no more than what he has upon the Authority of the firſt; there would be but *one* Witneſs.

Witneſs. And ſo if Prophecy had no other Senſe but what it borrowed from *Chriſt's* Interpretation; the Witneſs would be but *one*. It is neceſſary therefore, I ſay, that Prophecy ſhould contain a Senſe, which, when the Prophecies come to be compared with the Events, will appear to point at *Chriſt*, by common Rules of Interpretation, and ſeparate from any Uſe or Application made by him or by his Apoſtles; and this is the Senſe which I have been endeavouring to lay before you. I am well aware, how ready Unbelievers are to find fault with the Chriſtian Interpretation of Prophecy; and to ſay that it is mere *Gueſs-work*, *arbitrary* Applications of dark Paſſages to Events which the Authors never thought of: For which there will be always this Handle, that the Language of Prophecy ſtanding (as it needs muſt) *now*, juſt as it did when Prophecy was at firſt given; general, undetermined, pointing at ſomething hereafter to come, but not (preciſely) ſaying *what*; any one that pleaſes may ſay— *Jeſus Chriſt* is not expreſly mentioned, and how then do you know that he is intended?

ed? But this notwithſtanding, no reaſonable Man will ſay, that there is no Uſe of *Characters*. We uſe them every Day in Multitudes of Inſtances; and *Characters* will ſometimes mark a Man out ſo certainly, that you can no more miſtake him than if he had been ſpoken of by *Name*. Is it not then ſtrange and amazing, that in a Succeſſion of ſome thouſands of Years, there ſhould be a Series of Characters found in the Old Teſtament, all of them by eaſy and natural Interpretation agreeing in *one Man*; that *one Man* giving ſuch Proofs of a divine Miſſion as *Chriſt* gave! For my own part, I think it impoſſible to account for this, without ſuppoſing that the Hand and Counſel of God was concerned in this thing, from the Beginning to the End; or, if thoſe who are otherwiſe minded, will ſhew an Example parallel to it in all Hiſtory, I will give up the Argument.

And now having fully conſidered the *firſt* Part of the Evidence for *Chriſt's* Miſſion, the Evidence from *Prophecy*; I am led to the

the *ſecond*, the Evidence from his *Miracles*. But as a Concluſion to this, I will beg leave to remark, that as Prophecy is Evidence to eſtabliſh the Authority of *Chriſt's* Miſſion; ſo the Accompliſhment of Prophecy in *Chriſt* fully eſtabliſhes the Authority of Prophecy; as ſhewing both that the ancient Prophecies have been faithfully recorded and tranſmitted to us, and are indeed the Dictates of that Spirit to whom alone future Contingencies are open. And this yields a ſtrong *internal* Proof of the Authority of the Books of the Old Teſtament in general; which ſince they are found to be true in ſo material a Point, it is reaſonable to conclude, that they are ſo in the whole.

Of the Evidence from Miracles.

We are now come to the ſecond Branch of our Saviour's Evidence, his MIRACLES. *The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleanſed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raiſed up.* For the particular Hiſtories of theſe Works, I muſt refer to the Books of the New Teſtament, which are in every body's Hands. The

Queſtions that ariſe upon the Subject are theſe two, *viz.* 1. Whether ſuch Works were really wrought as the Hiſtory records. 2. Whether, ſuppoſing them to have been wrought, they are a juſt and legitimate Evidence of *Chriſt's* Miſſion. I ſhall begin with the laſt; becauſe, unleſs it can be proved that they *are* ſuch Evidence, it will be Loſs of Time and Labour to enquire whether they are or are not truly recorded.

In the firſt place then, it is clear, that theſe Works are truly of the miraculous kind. For there is nothing more remote from the common Operations of Nature, than raiſing dead Men to Life. And though Diſeaſes are often curable by natural Means, yet *all* are not, nor *any* by *ſuch* Means as *Chriſt* uſed; as by a *Word* ſpeaking, by a *Touch*, and the like. It is clear in the next place that *Chriſt appealed* to theſe Miracles, and *offered* them as *Evidence*, to ſhew that he came from God. *The Works that I do in my Father's Name they bear witneſs of me.* John x. 25. The Queſtion therefore will be, By WHAT POWER were theſe

theſe things done? If you ſay, By the Power of GOD, the Evidence muſt be admitted. For it has been already ſhewn, that Miracles, wrought by the Power of God in ſupport of a declared Miſſion from him, are as truly a Teſtimony from God, as any *Man's* Declaration by Word of Mouth, or under his Hand and Seal, are *his* Teſtimony.

But here it will be demanded, How are we aſſured that theſe were the Works of God, and not of ſome *intermediate* Agent? An Author [f] of great and deſerved Reputation hath, in treating upon this Subject, laid it down as his firſt Principle, that *none but* GOD *can work a Miracle*, i. e. by his own *natural* Power; and if this could be made good, the Queſtion would be brought to a very ſhort Iſſue. For upon this foot the Concluſion would immediately follow—*Chriſt* came in the Name of God, and

[f] Dr. *Fleetwood*, late Biſhop of *Ely*, in his *Eſſay on Miracles*, followed herein, very lately, by Mr. *Lemoine*, in his *Treatiſe on Miracles*, in which Book he has ſhewn much Good-ſenſe and Learning.

wrought Miracles, to juſtify his Pretenſions; therefore he was ſent of God. But this Opinion ſeems to me to be attended with inſuperable Difficulties, and founded upon very inſufficient Grounds. The general Reaſon aſſigned for it is, that "the Law of "Nature being ſettled by divine Power, "can be unſettled by no leſs[g]." Not to diſpute this Point, I anſwer, that a Miracle may be wrought, where no Law of Nature is unſettled. For Inſtance. It is a Law of Nature that the Earth draws all Bodies towards it, that are within the Sphere of its Attraction; and that if a Stone lies upon the Ground, there it will reſt, till it is removed by ſome external Force, ſuperior to that Force by which the Earth draws it to itſelf. I aſk then; When I take a Stone in my Hand, and lift it up from the Ground, what Law of Nature is unſettled? Plainly none. For the Stone, whilſt it is in my Hand, ſtill retains its gravitating Power; and the reaſon why it is lifted up, is becauſe the Force of my Hand exceeds that Force by which the Stone gravitates to-

[g] Page 5.

wards

wards the Earth. All this therefore is according to the Law of Nature. Would not the Caſe be the ſame, ſuppoſing a *Spirit*, or *inviſible* Being, ſhould lift up this Stone? Exactly. Will you ſay then that no Spirit but God hath naturally Power ſufficient to lift up a Stone from the Ground, which a Man or a Child can lift up? It would be abſurd. And yet though there is no Miracle in my lifting up a Stone with my Hand; ſhould I only give the Word of Command and ſay, *Stone, be thou lifted up*, and ſome Spirit ſhould inſtantly take it up, and ſuſpend it high in the Air; it would be a Miracle of the ſame kind with that mentioned by our Saviour, *Matt.* xvii. 20. *If ye have Faith as a Grain of Muſtard Seed, ye ſhall ſay unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder Place, and it ſhall remove.* There is no Law of Nature unſettled, when a *Spirit* lifts up the Stone, any more than when a *Man* lifts it up; and yet, I ſay, here is a Miracle wrought; becauſe though the Stone is lifted up according to the *Laws* of Nature, its being lifted up *at the Command of a Man*, is not according to the *Courſe* of Nature.

What is true in one Caſe may be as true in Multitudes of Caſes more (for who knows how far the natural Powers of intermediate Beings may extend?) and therefore ſetting this Principle aſide as unſafe to build upon, let us try to come at the Evidence in ſome other way. The Inconveniency, which is apprehended to ariſe from admitting, that other Beings beſides the ſupreme may naturally have the Power of working Miracles, is; that upon this foot you can never know, whether God be the Author of the Miracle or not, nor, conſequently, whether the Doctrine, in confirmation of which ſuch Miracle is wrought, hath the divine Atteſtation. "For (ſay they) you could "not know I came from, and was ſent by, "ſuch a Prince, by my bringing his Seal "along with me; if other People had the "ſame Seal, and would lend it to others "to uſe as they ſaw fit [h]." But this ſort of reaſoning (plauſible as it may ſeem) is really of no Weight. For, to apply the

[h] Page 6.

Objection

Objection to the Caſe of our Saviour *Chriſt*; let us ſuppoſe, that, *natural Power* only conſidered, ALL the Miracles wrought by him might have been the Work of ſome intermediate Being. This is granting to Unbelievers all that they can aſk, and more perhaps than in reaſon they can demand. For though it be true, that intermediate Beings (their natural Powers conſidered) may work Miracles; it will not hence follow, that they can work ALL Miracles. Some Effects may be within the reach of created Powers, others may *not*; and whether *many* of *Chriſt's* Miracles may not be of this latter ſort, is a Point that will be conſidered by and by. But for Argument ſake (I ſay) let the thing be granted, that, natural Power only conſidered, ALL the Miracles done by *Jeſus Chriſt* might have been the Work of ſome created, intermediate Being; ſtill do I not ſee how this Conceſſion hurts the Evidence. For what ſort of Being do you ſuppoſe ſhould have wrought them? Intermediate Beings are either *good* or *evil*. A *good* Being it could not be, unleſs you

ſuppoſe that he did theſe Works at the Command, and by the Authority of God. For *Chriſt* came in the Character of God's Prophet; declared he was ſent as the Meſſenger of his Will to Mankind; and in ſupport of this Character he wrought his Miracles. If this Pretenſion was not true, *Chriſt* was guilty of a high Uſurpation, and of great Impiety; in which no good Being can poſſibly be ſuppoſed to make himſelf a Partner. If *Chriſt* had come in *no* Character; the enabling him to work Miracles might have been conſidered as a thing indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden, but ſimply permitted. But to *vouch* for an *Impoſtor*; for one that *falſly* pretends to come in God's ſtead; is a high and flagrant Offence which no honeſt *Man* can be guilty of. If therefore the Miracles of *Chriſt* be ſuppoſed to have been the Works of ſome *good* Being, it muſt needs be that ſuch Being knew him to be what he pretended to be, and had God's *Warrant* and *Authority* for what he did; which brings the Matter to the ſame point as if God had wrought them by his own immediate Hand; for every *Man* does what

what is done by his *Subſtitute* for that Purpoſe. And if you ſay, it was not a *good* but an *evil* Being that wrought theſe Miracles, you will find it as hard to ſhew a Reaſon *why* he ſhould do it. The unbelieving *Jews* had ſome ſuch Notion as this; for when *Chriſt caſt out Devils*, they ſaid he did it *by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.* But what ſays our Saviour? *Every Kingdom divided againſt itſelf is brought to Deſolation; and every City or Houſe divided againſt itſelf ſhall not ſtand. And if Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt himſelf; how then ſhall his Kingdom ſtand?* Matt. xii. 25, 26. Our Saviour does not ſay that Satan (his natural Power conſidered) *could* not caſt out Satan. He rather ſuppoſes the contrary. For *Beelzebub* was the *Prince* of the Devils; and every Prince is preſumed to have Power over his own Subjects. But he ſhews the Abſurdity of ſuppoſing that he *would* caſt them out; becauſe in ſo doing, he would have acted to the Deſtruction of his own Kingdom. The Argument is very natural and familiar; calculated to work Conviction in the moſt common Apprehenſions; that no Power

can

can reaſonably be ſuppoſed to work to its own Deſtruction. And this may be ſaid of all Miracles, the viſible Tendency of which is to promote Truth, and Virtue, and Goodneſs: They cannot be the Work of the Devil, becauſe they operate to the Subverſion of his Dominion; for it is by *Sin* that the *Devil rules in the Children of Diſobedience.* Such were all the Miracles wrought by *Jeſus Chriſt*; and therefore it hurts not the Evidence, if it be ſuppoſed that the Devil or his Agents (their natural Power conſidered) might have wrought them, ſo long as it appears that they could have no Reaſon or Inducement to work them, but Cauſe to the contrary; juſt as it would not hurt the Evidence from my Seal, though other People had the ſame; upon ſuppoſition that it was againſt the Intereſt of every Man in the Kingdom to make uſe of it except myſelf.

But this is not all we have to ſay. For, ſuppoſing it true, that *evil* Beings not only had the natural Power to do the Works of *Chriſt*, but alſo that they were diſpoſed to have made uſe of that Power; ſtill the Queſtion

ſtion will be, Whether it can reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that God would have *ſuffered* it? For as all natural Powers are of God, they muſt be exerciſed in dependance upon him, and ſubject to his Reſtraint and Controul. And I ſay, that as God always *can*, ſo he always *will* reſtrain the natural Powers of evil Beings, ſo far as to leave a very plain and viſible Diſtinction between his true Prophets, and thoſe who falſly pretend to his Authority; becauſe the contrary Suppoſition *will* indeed leave no room for the uſe of Miracles, and conſequently will deſtroy the ſingle Method by which God can at any time manifeſt himſelf to the Sons of Men, in Matters which fall not within the reach of natural Knowledge. I do not ſay, that God cannot ſuffer a falſe Prophet to work a Miracle, or Miracles; nor is it neceſſary to ſay ſo in order to ſave the Uſe of Miracles. It is enough to ſay, that if he does ſuffer an Impoſtor to work Miracles, he will not, he cannot, *leave himſelf without Witneſs*, to all who will attend and are deſirous to know his Will. It is rightly obſerved in the Objection, that you could not

not know I came " from, and was ſent by, " ſuch a Prince, by my bringing his Seal " along with me, if other People had the " ſame Seal, and would lend it to others to " uſe as they ſaw fit." But is not the Diſparity between the two Caſes viſible? When a Prince lends his Seal to be uſed in common, he puts it out of his own Power; and under this Circumſtance the Seal can be no Evidence. But God is every where, and at all times *preſent*, to all created Beings; and therefore to make the Caſes parallel, you muſt ſuppoſe this Prince (in the Compariſon) ſtanding at every Man's Elbow that is diſpoſed to make uſe of his Seal, ready and able to reſtrain it, under ſuch or ſuch Circumſtances. In this caſe you may ſuppoſe him to give out as many Seals as you pleaſe, and the Evidence (when ſuch Circumſtances appear) will be the very ſame.

The Reſult then is, that Miracles *as* ſuch, or Miracles *ſimply* and *abſolutely* conſidered, are not Evidence of a Prophet's Miſſion; but Miracles ſo or ſo *circumſtanced.*

ced. The *Nature* of the Doctrine taught may be ſuch as will ſhew an Impoſtor; as when it contradicts common Senſe, overthrows the Principles of natural Religion, or of any prior Revelation ſufficiently eſtabliſhed. Under theſe or any of theſe Circumſtances, no Miracles can be admitted as Evidence; becauſe we are ſure that God cannot act in Oppoſition to *himſelf*; and conſequently if Miracles *are* wrought in ſupport of ſuch Doctrine, they muſt be the Work of ſome evil Being, and not the Work of God. But put the Caſe, that the Doctrine as to the Matter of it is *indifferent*, that is, ſomething which Natural Reaſon, or any prior Revelation, neither warrants nor contradicts; in this caſe, I ſay, Miracles will eſtabliſh ſuch a Teacher's Miſſion, PROVIDED no one ſets up any CONTRARY Pretenſion ſupported likewiſe by the Teſtimony of Miracles: Becauſe if Miracles are not to be admitted as Evidence, when nothing appears to *hinder*, they are *never* to be received, and it will be impoſſible for God to reveal himſelf; which is abſurd to be ſuppoſed.

The Caſe would be the ſame, if two Perſons ſhould ariſe, pretending each a Commiſſion from God, of *contrary* Import the one to the other, and Miracles ſhould be wrought in favour of both; UNLESS, in reſpect of *Power*, there ſhould appear a SUPERIORITY of the one above the other. For here would be two Witneſſes atteſting contrary *Facts*, and ſupported by equal Authority; in which caſe it will be impoſſible to know which to believe. But if there ſhould be a VISIBLE SUPERIORITY of *Power* in the one above the other; this would ſufficiently diſtinguiſh the true Prophet from the falſe; as in ordinary Caſes a Superiority in *Character*, as to Knowledge and Probity, will point out the true Witneſs: For ſo far as a Man ſtands diſtinguiſhed from another, ſo far he ſtands without a Rival. From theſe Principles this general Concluſion will ariſe, *viz.* That if any Perſon falſly pretends to a Commiſſion from God; God will either not ſuffer Miracles to be wrought at all to give Credit to his Pretenſions; or if, for Reaſons of his Providence, he ſhould ſuffer evil Beings

Beings to work a Miracle or Miracles, he will defeat them by the Evidences of a SUPERIOR POWER; which to all Intents and Purpoſes is the ſame thing, as if he had not permitted Miracles to have been wrought by ſuch evil Beings. This Principle agrees with our natural Conceptions of the ſupreme Governor of the World; who is as much concerned in Honour to guard the Subjects of his Kingdom againſt Impoſtures of this kind, as any earthly Monarch is to expoſe the Villain who ſhould forge his Seal, and uſurp a Commiſſion that was never granted him. And as this Principle is founded in right Reaſon, ſo it correſponds with *Fact* and *Experience*; as I ſhall now ſhew, by examining the Pretenſions of *Moſes* and of *Jeſus Chriſt*, by theſe Rules.

As to the firſt; *Moſes* was ſent (as we have ſhewn) to bring the Children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, and to ſettle them in the Land of *Canaan*. In order to this, he had two things to do after he was himſelf ſatisfied that God had revealed himſelf to him. One was to convince the *Iſraelites* his

his Brethren, that God had ſent him and appointed him to be their Deliverer: The other, to oblige *Pharaoh* to *let them go.* The firſt End was obtained by *the Signs* which he *did* in the Sight of the People, previouſly to his going unto *Pharaoh*; for ſo the Hiſtory ſays, *The People* BELIEVED, *and bowed their Heads and worſhipped.* Exod. iv. 30, 31. Thus far *Moſes* had *no* Competitor; and his Commiſſion therefore ſtood unimpeached upon the foot of his Miracles. But the laſt Point was ſtill to be provided for; and to this Purpoſe he goes in unto *Pharaoh*, and ſays, *Thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael,* LET MY PEOPLE GO. Chap. v. ver. 1. It is very neceſſary to be obſerved, that *Pharaoh* did not queſtion the Truth of what *Moſes* ſaid, when he told him (as it is mentioned ver. 3.) that *the God of the Hebrews* had *met with* him, and charged him with this Meſſage; but he diſputes the Authority of the God of the *Hebrews*, to command him to let the People go. WHO *is* THE LORD, *that I ſhould obey his Voice to let Iſrael go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Iſrael go.* ver. 2. *Moſes* now executes his Commiſſion, by working

working Miracles in the Sight of *Pharaoh*, and his Servants; not so much to convince them, that he came by the Authority of his own God (of whom the *Egyptians* knew nothing) as to shew them that the God, in whose Name he came, had both Authority to command, and Power to enforce whatever he should command; for thus the History represents the Case: *In this thou shalt* KNOW *that I am the Lord*, Chap. vii. 17.—*that thou mayest know that there is none* LIKE *unto the Lord our God*, Chap. viii. 10.—*that thou mayest know that there is none* LIKE *me in* ALL THE EARTH—*and in very deed for this Cause have I raised thee up, for to* SHEW *in thee* MY POWER, *and that* MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED IN ALL THE EARTH, Chap. ix. 14, 15, 16. These Passages shew (I say) that the Reason of God's working Miracles by the Hand of *Moses*, in the Sight of the *Egyptians*, was to make manifest HIS POWER; and to convince them and all the World, to whom the Fame of these Transactions should come, that though of those who were *called* Gods there were *many*, *and Lords many*, yet in him alone the sovereign Authority rested, and that he was in Power

ſuperior to them all. When therefore *Aaron caſt down his Rod before Pharaoh and before his Servants, and it became a Serpent*, what does *Pharaoh?* Why, he *called the wiſe Men, and the Sorcerers, who did in like manner with their Enchantments. For they caſt down every Man his Rod, and they became Serpents.* Chap. vii. ver. 11, and 12. Here now began a *Competition.* But what was the Point to be decided? Some ſtate it thus[i]: "*Moſes* "wrought Miracles to prove his divine "Commiſſion; the Magicians, on the "other hand, worked Miracles, to prove "that *Moſes* was an Impoſtor, and not ſent "of God," and hereupon they aſk, *Which are we to believe?* But do you not perceive that the Caſe, as thus ſtated, contradicts the Hiſtory? If when *Moſes* wrought Miracles to juſtify his Miſſion, ſome other Perſon had ariſen, pretending likewiſe to a Commiſſion from God of contrary Import to *Moſes's* Meſſage, and had wrought Miracles in juſtification of ſuch Pretenſion; this would have created a Difficulty, and it

[i] See Dr. *Clarke*, who thus ſtates the Caſe (*Evid. of Nat.* and *Rev. Rel.* p. 227. Ed. 6.) but not with his uſual Judgment.

might

might reaſonably have been aſked, "Which "are we to believe?" But this was not the Caſe. The Magicians, we will ſuppoſe (for it is not our Buſineſs at preſent to conteſt that Point) wrought Miracles as well as *Moſes*; but they took upon themſelves *no Character*; they pretended to *no Commiſſion* from the God of the *Hebrews*; they had *no Meſſage* to deliver as what their Works were to confirm. There was therefore no Competition between *Moſes* and the Magicians, whether he was or was not an Impoſtor; but between *Moſes* and the Magicians (or the God of *Moſes* and the Gods of the Magicians) which of them had the *greater Power*; and how abſurd would it be to aſk, "Which are we to believe, *Mo-* "*ſes*, or the Magicians?" when the Magicians had nothing to ſay!

It is very material to be obſerved, that the Magicians took the ſingle Method that could have given a reaſonable Satisfaction in this Queſtion. For they did not undertake barely to work *Miracles*; but to do the *very Works* which they ſaw done by *Moſes*. *Moſes* turned his Rod into a Ser-

pent; ſo did they. *Moſes* turned Water into Blood; ſo did they. *Moſes* brought Frogs upon the Land of *Egypt*; the Magicians did the ſame. But here their Power was at an End, and they could go no farther. If the Magicians had wrought as *many* Miracles as *Moſes* did, and they had been Miracles of *another kind*; it would have left the Queſtion undecided. For who, among the great Variety of Miracles that may be thought of, can certainly tell, which of them requires the greater Degree of Power? Who, for Inſtance, can tell which is eaſier; to reſtore a blind Man to Sight, or to turn a Rod into a Serpent; to turn a Rod into a Serpent, or Water into Blood; or to turn Water into Blood, or to bring up Frogs? Upon theſe and ſuch like Points, much Diſpute may be raiſed. But when they attempted the *very ſame* Works that *Moſes* did, and were *ſtopped* in the Attempt; this was Evidence to the moſt common Underſtanding, that their Power was *reſtrained*, and that the God of *Iſrael*, in whoſe Name *Moſes* wrought, was ſuperior to the Gods of the *Egyptians*, and to the Gods of the Nations round about them.

I take

I take this to be the true Reſolution of this Caſe; and upon the whole it appears, that (the Facts admitted) *Moſes's* Miſſion ſtands firmly eſtabliſhed upon his Miracles; becauſe, in reſpect of his Authority as a Prophet of the true God, he had *no Competitor.* The Magicians did not pretend to be Prophets of the true God; and had they come *in the Name* of any falſe God (of which yet we read nothing) this would have been confeſſing themſelves as acting by the Power of evil Beings, and their Miracles would have deſerved no Attention. Let us then proceed to the Caſe of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who came in the Name of the true God, as *Moſes* had done before him, with a Meſſage of much greater Importance, and works Miracles to juſtify his Pretenſions. Here again the ſame Objection recurs—"there were others who wrought "Miracles as well as *Chriſt*; and in Oppo-"ſition to *Chriſt*."—Very well. *Who* were they? and *what* were they? Did they come in the Name of God, as *Chriſt* did? Did they deliver any other Meſſage than *Chriſt* delivered? And did they do the

Works of *Chriſt* in Juſtification of their Pretenſions? Shew me this Caſe, and I will give up the Evidence. But no ſuch Caſe appears. There are two Inſtances to be met with in the New Teſtament, that may poſſibly be inſiſted on; *Simon* and *Elymas*. Theſe are both ſtyled [k] *Sorcerers*, but it does not appear that they took upon themſelves any other Character. But what were their Works? Did they do the Works of *Chriſt?* No. *Simon* plainly confeſſes himſelf *inferior* to the Apoſtles; for he WONDERED, *beholding the Miracles and Signs which were done. And when he ſaw, that through the laying on of their Hands the Holy Ghoſt was given, he offered them Money, ſaying,* GIVE ME *alſo this Power*, &c. ver. 18. Of *Elymas* we read no more, than that he *withſtood Paul and Barnabas, ſeeking to turn away the Deputy* [Sergius Paulus] *from the Faith.* But *Paul* rebuked him and ſmote him with *Blindneſs* (ver. 11.) in like manner as his Predeceſſors in the Trade of *conjuring* were, in common with the reſt of the *Egyptians*, ſmitten with *Boils*, Exod. ix. 11. Thus far then *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles ſtand clearly diſtin-

[k] See *Acts* viii. 9. and Chap. xiii. 8.

guiſhed

guiſhed from all falſe Pretenders. But what ſhall we ſay to thoſe *falſe Chriſts* and *falſe Prophets*, who, our Saviour ſays, ſhould *ariſe* in after times, *and ſhew* GREAT *Signs and Wonders?* Matt. xxiv. 24. Why, the ſame that I have ſaid to the reſt. If they took upon themſelves the Character of God's Prophets in Oppoſition to *Chriſt*, and if they wrought Miracles to juſtify their Pretenſions (all which you are at liberty to ſuppoſe) ſtill *one* neceſſary Mark was wanting, *they did not do the Works* of *Chriſt*. They could not ſay of themſelves as he ſaid of himſelf, *The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleanſed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raiſed up.* If you deny this, and ſay they *did* theſe Works, ſhew me their Hiſtory as well atteſted as *Chriſt's* Hiſtory is, and I will believe it. But if they did them *not* (which I take to be very certain, for otherwiſe we ſhould have heard more of them) the Reaſon muſt have been, becauſe they could not do them; for the *Will* to deceive was not wanting. And thus if you examine the Caſe of all the Pretenders that Hiſtory can furniſh ſince the Days of *Chriſt*, you will

find them all defective in some Mark or other that is essential to the Character of a true Prophet. If they came in the Name of God, they wrought no Miracles; or if they wrought Miracles, they either pretended to no Commission from God, or confessed an *Inferiority* to the true Prophets whom they opposed. The first was the Case of *Mahomet*; and one or the other of the two last was the Case of all the Miracle-workers, that have appeared either in the Heathen or in the Christian World, so far as their Histories deserve Credit. But we have no occasion to dispute *Facts*. They may ALL of them be admitted without any Impeachment of *Christ's* Mission, whom we do not receive as our Teacher and Lawgiver, barely because he wrought Miracles; but because he came to us in the Character of God's Messenger, and wrought Miracles in support of this Character, in which he shewed such a *Superiority* of Power, as sufficiently distinguished him from all Impostors.

The Argument then is plain and convincing, thus—There is no Defect on the part

part of the Miracles of *Chriſt*, who was in Power ſuperior to all that ever oppoſed him. There is no Defect in the Matter of his Revelation, to bar the Evidence of Miracles, his Doctrine not contradicting either the Principles of natural Reaſon, or any *prior* Revelation ſufficiently eſtabliſhed. Not the firſt, becauſe his Laws are either the Law of Nature itſelf, or ſubſervient to it; and the ſeveral Points offered to our Belief, though ſome of them are above the Power of Reaſon to explain, are in no Inſtance a Contradiction to Reaſon. Not the ſecond, becauſe there was no *prior* Revelation ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, except the *Jewiſh* and *Patriarchal*, of which the Chriſtian Revelation is, not the *Deſtruction*, but the *Completion*. His Miracles therefore are to be admitted as Evidence of his divine Miſſion, as *Moſes's* are, for the ſame Reaſon, to be admitted as Evidence of *his* divine Miſſion: For in none of theſe reſpects did *Moſes* differ from *Chriſt*, unleſs we may except this one (certainly not to his *Diſadvantage*) that he indeed had (properly ſpeaking) *no* Competitor.

Let

Let us try then, if we can carry the Argument a little farther. I have hitherto argued upon the Suppoſition, that, natural Power only conſidered, ALL the Miracles wrought by *Chriſt* might have been the Work of ſome intermediate Agent; which (as I have before obſerved) is a Point that may very reaſonably be called in queſtion. For it is very certain that *ſome* of our Saviour's Miracles were of that ſort, that (ſo far as we are able to judge) they could not be the Work of any other Power, than that by which the Heavens and the Earth were made. What is raiſing a dead Man to Life, but doing the very thing which God did at the Creation of the World, when he *breathed* into the ſluggiſh Clay *the Breath of Life, and Man became a living Soul?* What is multiplying Bread to ſatisfy the Hungry, or turning Water into Wine, but a Species of that plaſtic Power, which out of the ſame common Maſs of Matter formed all that Variety of natural Subſtances that we ſee about us? If you ſee cauſe to think (as ſome Philoſophers have thought) that God made the World by intermediate Agents;

Agents; you may with as good Reaſon ſay, that the Miracles of *Chriſt* were done by intermediate Agents. But this Opinion, whether true or falſe, makes no Difference in the Argument. For though it ſhould be admitted, that the World was not made by God immediately, but by ſome intermediate Power; ſtill it is ſuppoſed that his Wiſdom and Counſel was concerned in the Work; and if the ſame Hand by which the World was framed and faſhioned, was likewiſe employed in bearing Teſtimony to the Author of our Redemption; it will bear no Queſtion, whether the Wiſdom and Counſel of God was not alike concerned in both.

It may ſeem perhaps to be an Objection againſt this, that, if the Bible Hiſtory is to be credited, ſuch Works as we are now ſpeaking of have been performed, even by thoſe who confeſſedly were not ſent of God. We ſee no Difference between that Power which can raiſe a dead Man to Life, and that which can turn a Stick into a Serpent; nor between that Power which can turn Water into Wine, and that which can turn

Water

Water into Blood; yet the Magicians of *Egypt* did both. But, in the firſt place, I do not think it to be a clear Point that the Magicians did either. I have hitherto *ſuppoſed* indeed that the Magicians really did what they are *ſaid* to have done, becauſe, as yet I have had no Occaſion to enter into this Queſtion. But it may very well bear a Diſpute, whether theſe Feats of the Magicians were real Miracles, or were not rather *Impoſtures*, or *Deluſions*, in which they made a ſhew of doing what they really did not. It is thus that moſt Chriſtian Writers underſtand the Caſe; and thus that the Author of the *Book of Wiſdom* treats it, Chap. xvii. ver. 7. where he calls theſe Feats *the* ILLUSIONS *of Art magic*. Magic and Sorcery are in the general Notion of them Arts of Impoſture; and the New Teſtament as well as the Old conſiders them in this Light. *Simon* was a Sorcerer, and of him it is ſaid, that he BEWITCHED *the People of Samaria*, GIVING OUT *that he was ſome great one*[1]; the manifeſt Character of a Cheat. That he was no Worker of Miracles ſeems plain; for if he had been

[1] *Acts* viii. 9.

ſuch

ſuch he would not have *wondered* when he ſaw *the Miracles and Signs which were done* by the Apoſtles; nor *offered them Money* to give them the ſame Power. *Simon* then was a vain Pretender, who did ſome ſtrange things, to deceive the Multitude; and as *Elymas* bears the ſame Character, no doubt he was of the ſame Stamp.

But to return to the Magicians of *Egypt*. I do not think that the Language of the Scripture is Reaſon ſufficient to lead us to think, that they really wrought the Works which were wrought by *Moſes*. It is ſaid, that the Magicians DID SO, or IN LIKE MANNER, *with their Inchantments*—that their Rods *became Serpents*—and that they *brought up Frogs upon the Land of Egypt*. But is there a more common Form of Speech, than to ſay of Impoſtors, that they *do* what they only *ſeem* to do? It will not be expected, I ſuppoſe, that I ſhould explain how, or in what manner, the Magicians impoſed upon *Pharaoh* and his Servants. I cannot explain how a common Jugler performs his *Leger de main*; and yet I know him to be a Cheat. And this may very

very eaſily be conceived in the preſent Caſe, that ſomething the Magicians might do in Imitation of what was done by *Moſes*, that paſſed with many for the ſame thing; and this, for ought I can perceive, is all that the Scripture Language neceſſarily implies. But be it admitted that the Magicians wrought real Miracles; that they turned Rods into Serpents, Water into Blood, and multiplied Frogs as *Moſes* did; the Queſtion will ſtill remain—*by what Power?* Thoſe who are of this Opinion commonly have Recourſe to the Power of evil Beings, of which yet the Hiſtory is wholly ſilent. I ſhould rather chuſe therefore to ſuppoſe, with Biſhop *Fleetwood*, that if theſe were true and real Miracles, they were wrought by the ſame Power that wrought in *Moſes*, that is, by the Power of God; the more effectually to expoſe the Pretenſions of the Magicians, who ſuffered a more ſignal Defeat in being baffled in their future Attempts, after having performed ſome great things, than they would if they had performed nothing. Nor let it be ſaid, that in this way of reſolving the Caſe we make God a Liar; for the Miracles *atteſted* nothing,

thing, becauſe the Magicians (as I have before obſerved) pretended to nothing but to ſhew their Power. God wrought the Miracles, as we now ſuppoſe, and left the *Egyptians* to their own Concluſions; and what could they conclude upon the Upſhot of the whole Matter but this, that *great* indeed was the God of the *Hebrews*, who, when the Gods of their Country (as it is to be preſumed they thought) had by the Hands of the Magicians performed Wonders, in all human Apprehenſion and Judgment the *greateſt*, did, by the Hand of his Servant *Moſes*, manifeſt a Power ſuperior to them all?

I have ſaid thus much to ſhew, that we have no Evidence from the Scripture, that ſuch Works as *Chriſt* wrought, could (*many* of them) have been performed by any Power leſs than the ſupreme, or (which is all one) other than *that* Power, which at firſt framed the materal Syſtem. And I believe it will be impoſſible to find an Inſtance of ſuch Works, performed by any, excepting the Meſſengers of the true God, in any well atteſted Hiſtory. Or if you ſhould find

find such Instances, you may still (possibly) be at Liberty to suppose such Miracles to have been wrought by the Power of God, in like manner as the Miracles wrought by the Magicians (if really such Miracles were wrought) have been supposed to have been wrought by the Power of God. But those who are not satisfied with this Argument, may securely rest themselves upon the Principles above laid down, *viz.* that God sets the Bounds to all natural Powers, beyond which they cannot go; that he cannot be unfaithful to himself or to his Creatures, but will always shew a plain and visible Distinction, in point of Power, between his true Messengers and those who falsly pretend a Commission from him; and that such Power appeared in *Christ*, as no Prophet, falsly pretending to God's Authority in Opposition to him, ever equalled. So that upon the whole, I must take the Liberty to conclude, that the Miracles of *Jesus Christ*, *supposing them wrought*, are a full, legitimate Evidence of his Mission.

We are come then at last to the point of *Fact*; Were these Miracles wrought, or were

were they *not ?* For the Deciſion of which Queſtion, the Appeal lies to the Authority of the *New* Teſtament ; as the Proof of *Moſes's* Miracles reſts upon the Authority of the *Old.* It cannot be reaſonably expected, that I ſhould enter into a particular Defence of the Authenticalneſs of theſe Books, which has employed the Learning of many Ages. Let it ſuffice to ſay, in general, that it ſtands upon the ſame Bottom by which the Authority of all ancient Writings is ſupported, *viz.* the public Reception of them as the genuine Writings of the Authors whoſe Names they bear, in a conſtant Succeſſion through all Ages from the times in which thoſe Writers lived. Of the Books of the *New* Teſtament it ſhould be obſerved, that their early Diſperſion into different Nations, and Tranſlation into various ancient Languages (a Circumſtance almoſt peculiar to theſe Books) are Evidence, not only of their coming down to us uncorrupted, but likewiſe of their great Fame and Reputation, as Pieces of genuine Hiſtory, containing a true Narrative of real Facts, and not as romantic Tales forged by Impoſtors, to deceive the credulous Part

of Mankind. Inſtead of ſaying more to this Matter, I ſhall recite to you what has been well ſaid upon it by a late Writer, who cannot be ſuppoſed, at leaſt to be overmuch, *bigotted* to Chriſtian Principles. " The " Authority of theſe Books (ſays he) does " not depend upon the Faith of—any par- " ticular Set of Men ; but on the general " Credit and Reception which they found " not only in all the Churches, but with " all the private Chriſtians of thoſe Ages, " who were able to purchaſe Copies of " them: Among whom, though it might " perhaps be the Deſire of a few to corrupt, " yet it was the common Intereſt of all, " to preſerve, and of none to deſtroy them. " And we find accordingly, that they were " guarded by all with the ſtricteſt Care, ſo " as to be concealed from the Knowledge " and Search of their Heathen Adverſaries, " who alone were deſirous to extirpate " them. After ſuch a Publication there- " fore, and wide Diſperſion of them from " their very Origin; it is hardly poſſible " that they ſhould be either corrupted, or " ſuppreſſed, or counterfeited by a few, of " what Character or Abilities ſoever ; or

" that

" that according to the natural Courſe of
" things they ſhould not be handed down
" from Age to Age, in the ſame manner
" with the Works of all the other ancient
" Writers of *Greece* and *Rome*; which
" though tranſmitted through the Hands of
" many profligate and faithleſs Generations
" of Men, yet have ſuffered no Diminu-
" tion of their Credit on that account: For
" though in every Age there were ſeveral
" perhaps, who, from crafty and ſelfiſh
" Motives, might be diſpoſed to deprave,
" or even to ſuppreſs, ſome particular
" Books; yet their Malice could reach
" only to a few Copies, and would be re-
" ſtrained therefore from the Attempt, or
" corrected at leaſt after the Attempt, by
" the greater Number of the ſame Books,
" which were out of their reach, and re-
" mained ſtill incorrupt. Beſides all this,
" there were ſome Circumſtances peculiar
" to the Books of the New Teſtament,
" which inſured the Preſervation of them
" more effectually than of any of the other
" ancient Books whatſoever; the Divinity
" of their Character, and the religious Re-
" gard which was paid to them, by all the

" Sects and Parties of Chriſtians; and " above all, the mutual Jealouſies of thoſe " very Parties, which were perpetually " watching over each other, leſt any of " them ſhould corrupt the Sources of that " pure Doctrine, which they all profeſſed " to teach and to deduce from the ſame " Books.—It was not in the Power there- " fore (concludes he) of any Craft to im- " poſe ſpurious Pieces, in the room of thoſe " genuine ones, which were actually depo- " ſited in all Churches, and preſerved with " the utmoſt Reverence in the Hands of ſo " many private Chriſtians[1]."

This Paſſage contains, I think, the full Import of what is offered, and reaſonably offered, by Chriſtian Writers, to ſhew, that the Books of the New Teſtament, as we now have them, are the genuine Writings of the ſeveral Authors whoſe Names they bear; and conſidering their Characters, and that they were moſt of them Apoſtles of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who attended him in his Miniſtry; one would be inclined to think, that a fair Preſumption will lie from hence, that his

[1] *Middleton's Free Inquiry*, &c. p. 190.

Miracles

Miracles as by them reported are truly recorded: For in all ordinary Caſes, unleſs ſpecial Reaſons appear to queſtion the Fidelity of an Hiſtorian, his Hiſtory finds eaſy Credit when he writes of things done in his own times, and of which he himſelf pretends to have had a perſonal Knowledge. But an Unbeliever perhaps will, without much Difficulty, admit the Genuineneſs of the Books, and yet diſpute the Truth of the *miraculous* Facts therein recorded, upon ſuch Arguments as theſe—"We ſhould "diſtinguiſh between things totally different "from each other; between *Miracle* and "*Nature*; the *extraordinary* Acts of God, "and the *ordinary* Tranſactions of Man; "to ſuſpend our Belief of the one, while, "on the ſame Teſtimony, we grant it freely "to the other; and to require a different "Degree of Evidence for each, in proportion to the different Degrees of their Credibility [m]." Again; "we ſhould ſuſpend "our Aſſent to Reports of a miraculous "kind, though atteſted by an Authority, "which might ſafely be truſted in the Report of ordinary Events [n]." Once more;

[m] Ibid. p. 231. [n] Ibid. p. 229.

" the Hiſtory of Miracles is of a kind totally
" different from that of common Events;
" the one to be ſuſpected always of courſe,
" without the ſtrongeſt Evidence to con-
" firm it; the other to be admitted of courſe,
" without a ſtrong Reaſon to ſuſpect it.
" Ordinary Facts related by a credible Per-
" ſon, furniſh no Cauſe of doubting from
" the Nature of the thing; but if they be
" ſtrange and extraordinary, Doubts natu-
" rally ariſe, and in proportion as they ap-
" proach towards the Marvellous, thoſe
" Doubts will ſtill increaſe and grow ſtrong-
" er; for mere Honeſty will not warrant
" them; we require other Qualities in the
" Hiſtorian; a Degree of Knowledge, Ex-
" perience, and Diſcernment ſufficient to
" judge of the whole Nature and Circum-
" ſtances of the Caſe; and if any of theſe
" be wanting, we naturally ſuſpend our Be-
" lief. A weak Man indeed, if honeſt,
" may atteſt common Events as credibly as
" the wiſeſt; yet can hardly make any Re-
" port that is credible of ſuch as are miracu-
" lous; becauſe a Suſpicion will always
" occur, that his Weakneſs and imperfect
" Knowledge of the Extent of human Art

" had

" had been impoſed upon by the Craft of " cunning Juglers[o]." I make no queſtion, but that every Unbeliever thinks he has a Right to conſider the Apoſtles of *Chriſt* as *weak Men*; and will it not then be very natural to ſuch a one to reply to a Chriſtian, when he appeals to the New Teſtament to prove the Miracles of *Chriſt*, in ſome ſuch manner as this? *viz.* We receive your Hiſtory ſo far as it contains an Account of common Events; but ſo far as it contains a Hiſtory of Miracles we reject it. Is it not thus that we muſt diſtinguiſh in reading all common Hiſtories, unleſs we will ſuffer ourſelves to be impoſed upon? " There is " not a ſingle Hiſtorian of Antiquity, whe- " ther *Greek* or *Latin*, who has not re- " corded *Oracles*, *Prodigies*, *Prophecies*, " and *Miracles*—Many of theſe are at- " teſted in the graveſt manner, and by the " graveſt Writers, and were firmly believed " by the Populace at the time; yet it is " certain, that there is not one of them " which we can reaſonably take to be ge- " nuine.—For Example, *Dionyſius* of *Ha- " licarnaſſus* is eſteemed one of the moſt

[o] Ibid. p. 217.

" faithful and accurate Hiſtorians of Anti-
" quity. We take his Word without ſcru-
" ple—in his Account of the Civil Affairs
" of *Rome*; yet we laugh at the fictitious
" Miracles which he has interſperſed in it,
" [as when] in the War with the *Latins*
" he tells us, how the Gods *Caſtor* and *Pol-*
" *lux* appeared viſibly on white Horſes,
" and fought on the Side of the *Romans*,
" who by their Aſſiſtance gained a complete
" Victory—— We admit the Battle and
" the Victory; and take the miraculous
" part to be, what it certainly was, the
" Fictions of the Commanders or Per-
" ſons intereſted. —Thus in the Narra-
" tive of the Martyrdom of St. *Polycarp*;
" the point of Hiſtory is, that he was con-
" demned to Death at *Smyrna*, of which
" he was Biſhop, and there actually burnt at
" the Stake, for his Profeſſion of the Chri-
" ſtian Faith. We have no doubt there-
" fore of his Martyrdom, yet may rea-
" ſonably pauſe at the Miracles which are
" ſaid to have attended it," [p] *&c.*

By this Diſtinction, the Author fancies that he has ſaved the Credit of ancient Hi-

[p] Ibid. p. 218——221.

ſtory

ſtory, whether Eccleſiaſtical or Civil, whilſt he has reſerved to himſelf a Liberty to reject (or to ſuſpect at leaſt) all Accounts of miraculous Events in either. But, I think, he is miſtaken. For a miraculous Event *may* have all the Advantages of external Proof, that the moſt common Event has; and if, this notwithſtanding, it may be treated as falſe or ſuſpicious, I ſee not what there is in Hiſtory that can be depended upon. But whatever there be in this, it is certain that the Argument lies as ſtrong againſt the Goſpel as againſt any other Hiſtory; for why may not an Unbeliever go on and ſay, —"Thus alſo in the Narrative of the "Acts of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Points of Hi- "ſtory are, that he took upon himſelf to be "a Prophet, and inſtituted a new Religion, "for which he was cruelly put to death by "the *Jews*. Theſe Facts, and whatever "other ordinary Occurrences are recorded "in his Hiſtory, we admit. But we pauſe "at the Miracles which are ſaid to have "been wrought in his Favour, either when "he was living or after he was dead; for "they were weak Men that recorded them, "and a weak Man can hardly make any "Report

" Report that is credible, of ſuch Events as " are miraculous."

In anſwer then to this Objection I reply;

1. That *extraordinary* or *miraculous* Events are, in the Nature of them, or as to the *Poſſibility* of their Exiſtence, as credible as *ordinary*; that is to ſay, it is as eaſy to conceive, that God hath *Power* to work a Miracle, and that in certain caſes it may be *reaſonable* and *fit* for him ſo to do; as that he ſhould execute any ordinary Act of his Providence. For as to *Power*, it is clear that he that at firſt eſtabliſhed the Courſe of Nature, can as eaſily alter the Courſe of Nature: And if you ſay, that though God has *Power* to work Miracles, it is not credible that he ever *will* work them; you muſt then ſhew it to be incredible, that God ſhould upon any account alter the eſtabliſhed Courſe of things (which I take to be impoſſible) and particularly you muſt ſhew (which is equally impoſſible) that it is incredible that God ſhould at any time make any ſupernatural Revelations of his Will; becauſe granting the Credibility that God may make ſuch Revelations, you muſt of courſe admit the Credibility of his work-

ing

ing Miracles, without which no ſuch Revelations can be made. Whereas therefore the Objection ſets forth, that "*Miracle* "and *Nature*; the *extraordinary* Acts of "God, and the *ordinary* Tranſactions of "Man, are things *totally different*," and thence *infers*, that we are "to ſuſpend "our Belief of the one, while on *the* "*ſame Teſtimony* we grant it freely to "the other; and to require a different De-"gree of Evidence for each, in proportion "to the different Degrees of their Credibi-"lity;" the Concluſion is manifeſtly wrong. For this Reaſoning ſuppoſes, that Miracles *as ſuch* are *leſs credible*, than ordinary Events, which is not true; for, in their Place and Order, they are both equally credible; that is, it is juſt as credible that God ſhould work Miracles in Teſtimony of his Prophets, as that he ſhould ſend Rain and fruitful Seaſons for the common Suſtenance of Life. Extraordinary Events are ſuppoſed, in the very Notion of them, to be *leſs frequent* than ordinary; but they are not therefore *leſs credible*. It is as credible that the *Plague* may be in *London* as that the *Small Pox* ſhould be there. And yet the former is not near ſo *frequent* as the latter.

2. A Man's Senſes are to *himſelf* as good Evidence of a Miracle as of an ordinary Event, that is of a Fact varying from the common Courſe of Nature, as of a Fact correſponding to it. I ſay, of a *Fact*; becauſe the *Fact* is the only thing that can be judged of by Senſe: Not of the *Power* by which that Fact is produced; which is a Matter of Reaſon and Speculation. The *Fact* then being ſuppoſed miraculous, a Man's Senſes, I ſay, are as good Evidence of the Reality of ſuch Fact, as they are of any ordinary or common Event. When I ſee a *Monſter*, and when I ſee a *natural* Birth, my Eyes are as good Evidence in the one caſe as in the other; and ſo it is when I ſee a Man cured of Blindneſs or Lameneſs, whether it be done by natural Means or in a way that is ſupernatural. Therefore when I doubt of a matter that lies before me, be it ordinary or extraordinary, the Doubt muſt be, not whether I am to believe my Eyeſight or not, but whether I am or am not ſome way ſo deceived, as to think I ſee what I really ſee not. If I ſee (or think I ſee) a Man at a Diſtance whom I preſume

to

to be in another Place, I may reaſonably doubt, whether the Grounds of my Preſumption of his being elſewhere be good, or whether it be he or ſome body very like him; but I can doubt of nothing elſe. So if I ſee an *Apparition*; I may doubt whether what preſents itſelf to me has any real Exiſtence, or whether the Appearance is not raiſed by ſome Diſorder in the bodily Organ. But ſuppoſing it clear, that I ſee what I think I ſee, I can no longer doubt whether the thing exiſts; and this is true in all Caſes; for *ordinary* or *extraordinary* can make no Difference. Therefore

3. A Perſon's *Veracity* ſuppoſed, his Report of an *extraordinary* Event is as good Evidence as his Report of an *ordinary* one, upon Suppoſition that there is Reaſon ſufficient to believe, that he himſelf neither was nor could be impoſed upon. Without this Circumſtance, the Teſtimony of an honeſt Man, even in ordinary Matters, is not to be depended upon. If a Man ſhould tell me that he was at ſuch a Battle, and that ten thouſand Men were ſlain on both Sides, it would be no Evidence, unleſs I ſaw Reaſon

ſon to believe that he was qualified to judge of the Number of the Slain. In like manner, if an Hiſtorian ſhould ſay in general Terms, that he ſaw ſuch a one reſtore a blind Man to Sight by ſpeaking a Word; I muſt alſo be ſatisfied, that he was qualified to know that the Man was blind, and that he afterwards ſaw, or it will not ſuffice. But the proper Circumſtances ſuppoſed in each Caſe, the Evidence in either will be equally good.

I think the Objection allows this. For it ſays, that "the mere Honeſty [of the "Relator] will not warrant [the Belief of "Miracles]"—True; nor the Belief of any thing elſe that I know of. But why? The Reaſon follows—"We require other "Qualities in the Hiſtorian; a Degree of "Knowledge, Experience, and Diſcern-"ment, ſufficient to judge of the whole "Nature and Circumſtances of the Caſe; "and if any of theſe be wanting, we ne-"ceſſarily ſuſpend our Belief[q]." Right again; but what if *none* of theſe Circumſtances are wanting? Have we not then

[q] Ibid. p. 217.

leave

leave to ſay that the Evidence is good? Yes; but it is ſaid, that when a weak Man reports a Miracle, we can *never* be certain that he was rightly qualified to judge of the Matter by him reported; becauſe "a Suſpi-"cion will ALWAYS occur, that his Weak-"neſs and imperfect Knowledge of the Ex-"tent of human Art, had been impoſed "upon." This is calling in a Circumſtance that hath nothing to do in the Queſtion. What if a Man knows not the Extent of human Art; has not every one Experience and Diſcernment enough to know (for Inſtance) whether his Neighbour is blind or lame; or when a Cure in ſuch Caſes is wrought, is it not as eaſy for him to know that it was done by a Touch, or by a Word's ſpeaking, as that it was done by natural Applications? There appears then to be no Foundation for the Aſſertion, that "the ſame Authority that may be "truſted in the Report of *ordinary* Events, "may not be truſted in the Report of *ex-*"*traordinary* ones." You cannot (with Safety) truſt a Man in his Report of the moſt common thing, unleſs his Teſtimony be properly circumſtanced. And if it is ſo

circum-

circumſtanced that you cannot reaſonably deny him Credit, when he reports things of ordinary Occurrence; why is it not as reaſonable, with the ſame Circumſtances, to believe the ſame Man, when he tells you of extraordinary Matters? True it is that Mankind (generally) are not ſo readily diſpoſed to believe Reports of extraordinary things, as they are to believe Reports of ordinary ones. For we are very apt to conſider a thing as *impoſſible*, the like to which we have never ſeen or heard: And hence it is, that Reports of ſuch Matters are admitted with Difficulty, though ſupported by the beſt Authority. Common Events, on the other hand, reconcile themſelves to us by their Familiarity; and the Reports of theſe (eſpecially when they are not intereſting) we are ready to admit upon the ſlighteſt Grounds. But ſurely it is very abſurd to lay that down as a Rule of Judgment, which is the mere Effect of human Weakneſs and Partiality, and the very Reaſon why we are ſo often miſtaken or impoſed upon. If any one ſhould (according to our Author's Rule) "*admit of courſe* the "Report of common Events, *without a* "*ſtrong*

"*ſtrong Reaſon to ſuſpect them*;" in what a Multitude of Inſtances muſt he be deceived? For how many Reports do we hear every Day, which though falſe, we have yet no Reaſon to ſuſpect? He would as ſurely (though not ſo often) be in the wrong, ſhould he refuſe to admit Reports of extraordinary things, though ſupported by the ſame Authority upon which he admits common Facts. *Ordinary* and *extraordinary* are ſuch in reſpect only of our own Knowledge and Experience; and do you think it reaſonable to reject common Authority, unleſs the Matter atteſted falls in with your own Obſervation? Thoſe who have themſelves never been in foreign Countries, have nothing but common Authority to acquaint them with the great Variety of Plants and Animals, of which we knew nothing here. And yet to queſtion ſuch things, though atteſted by the graveſt Witneſſes, would ſurely be a moſt ſenſeleſs Scepticiſm. In ſhort; it is with things *ordinary* and *extraordinary* as it is with things *intereſting* and *not* intereſting. We are, and ought to be, more *ſcrupulous* upon what *Grounds* we believe, in the one Caſe, than in the other. If a Perſon of Credit

ſhould tell you, that ſuch a one (a common Acquaintance) was dead; you would poſſibly believe him without Heſitation. But if the ſame Man ſhould tell you, that your *Father*, or your *Friend* is dead; you would be apt to make ſtrict Enquiry, upon what Authority he reports it. But the Reaſon of this is, that in this latter Caſe you want to be ſure that you *have* the proper Evidence; not, that the *ſame* Evidence will not do in *both*.

The Reſult is this; that in things which are to be received upon Teſtimony (of which ſort are all Facts, whether common or extraordinary, for which we have not the Evidence of our Senſes) the Nature of the thing teſtified, and the Quality of the Witneſſes are to be conſidered. If the thing teſtified is in the Nature of it credible, and the Witneſſes are qualified to judge of the Truth of it, ſo as that we may be ſecure they could not themſelves be deceived in what they report; their *Veracity* ſuppoſed, ſuch Teſtimony is to be admitted; and this in things extraordinary as well as ordinary: For the one as well as the other may be both credible in themſelves, and ſo circumſtanced that we may be very ſecure that

that the Witneſſes themſelves could not have been deceived. There is no other plain Rule of Judgment than this; whatever over-curious Speculations may have been raiſed upon this Subject, not (we may be ſure) for Inſtruction, but to puzzle the Underſtandings of Men. The *Veracity* of the Apoſtles then (for the preſent) ſuppoſed; we are to conſider, whether the Miracles of *Chriſt* are ſo reported, that, we may be ſecure, they neither were nor could have been impoſed upon. The Author, whoſe Reaſoning I have now been reſcuing from the Hands of Unbelievers (which, by the way, is more than he thought fit to do himſelf) ſays, that "mean and ſimple Men, "as the Apoſtles were—their Knowledge "of the Facts which they relate, ſcarce "admits the Probability of a Miſtake;" which how it will ſtand with his general Principles, it is more his Buſineſs to ſhew than mine. But the Aſſertion is true, whoever ſays it; as I ſhall now undertake to prove. To ſpeak diſtinctly to every Miracle recorded in the New Teſtament, would be endleſs as well as needleſs. I ſhall think it ſufficient to examine the great and cloſing Miracle, our Saviour's RESURRECTION,

which may ſerve as a Pattern for all the reſt.

Before it can be known that *Chriſt* was *raiſed* from the Dead, it muſt be known that he was both *alive* and *dead*; and in neither of theſe Points could the Authors of our Saviour's Hiſtory poſſibly have been miſtaken. For they were ſome of them (as the Story ſays) his immediate Diſciples and Followers, who conſtantly attended him during the Courſe of his Miniſtry; ſo that they had all the Evidence of his being a *living* Man, that any one has or can have that there is a living Man upon Earth beſides himſelf. Of his *Death* there can be as little queſtion. For he was crucified by the *Roman* Governor in the Sight of all the People, among whom were his neareſt Relations and Friends, who took care of his Body after he was taken down from the Croſs, and with the uſual Preparations laid it in the Grave. What Evidence have we that any Man in the World ever died greater than this? But how did they did know that he was afterwards alive? Why, in the ſame way that you know your Child, or your Friend, or your Acquaintance, to be alive. They *ſaw* him, and this not by one

one tranſient View, as you may ſee a *Ghoſt* or *Apparition*, but they ſaw him *often*; they *ate* with him, they *converſed* with him, for *forty Days* together. If you admit the *Veracity* of the Apoſtles, theſe Circumſtances muſt be admitted; and if this was not Evidence to them that he was alive, you can have no Evidence that there is any Man upon Earth now living. The Apoſtles knew *Chriſt* to be alive before he was crucified, becauſe they ſaw and converſed with him. They neither had nor could have had any greater Evidence than this. And were not their Senſes, when they ſaw and converſed with him in the ſame manner after his Crucifixion, as good Evidence that he was then alive, as that he was alive before? If not, tell me how you know any Man to be alive, whom you ſaw and converſed with four or five Days ago. Muſt not your Anſwer be, that you ſee and converſe with him *now*, in like manner as you did four or five Days ago? Have you, *can* you have, any greater Evidence than this? Where now is the Difference between theſe two Caſes? Why, *Chriſt* was dead in the intermediate Space. The *Man* (we will ſuppoſe) was alive and elſewhere

about his Buſineſs. This is a great Difference indeed; but the Difference affects not the Argument. For the Evidence has no kind of Dependance upon what happened in the *intermediate* Space, but ſtands entirely upon this, that the ſame Object is in the ſame manner preſented to your Senſes *now*, in which it was preſented to you four or five Days ago. Inſtead of ſuppoſing the Man to have been awake, and about his Buſineſs during the Interval, you may, if you pleaſe, ſuppoſe him to have been *aſleep*; and the Argument will ſtand juſt as it does. By the ſame Rule you may alſo ſuppoſe him to have been *dead*; for between *dead* and *aſleep*, in this Caſe, there is no Difference.

You might then, if you ſaw Cauſe, diſpute the Truth of this Circumſtance, that *Chriſt* was ſeen by and converſed with his Diſciples and Friends, after his Crucifixion and Death, in the manner reported by the Evangeliſts; but, this Circumſtance admitted (as the Nature of the Argument requires it ſhould be admitted) there will be no Senſe in aſking, whether *Chriſt* was really alive, or whether his Apoſtles were not impoſed upon. You may as well queſtion your

your own Senſes, and aſk, whether all that you ſee and hear about you, is not Dream and Deluſion. If you ſay, that *all* the Miracles of *Chriſt* are not thus circumſtantially recorded, you will ſay what is very true, but what will do you little Service: For give me but this one Miracle, and I will not aſk your Leave to take the reſt. If *Chriſt* was really raiſed from the Dead, the Miracles which he did in his Life-time will then be in themſelves both credible and probable; and the Preſumption will lie, that the Apoſtles, who did not believe the one till after they had received the ſtrongeſt Proof of the Truth of the Fact, obſerved the like Caution in reſpect of the other alſo.

We have now therefore brought the Queſtion to the Point of the *Veracity* of the Apoſtles; and we are to *prove* what has hitherto only been *ſuppoſed*, that they were ſincere Men, and have faithfully reported what they knew of theſe Matters. Againſt this a general Prejudice has been raiſed by Unbelievers, who pretend that upon the very Face of the Hiſtory of *Chriſt's* Miracles there appears ſuch Inconſiſtencies and Contrarieties, as plainly ſhew, that the

Authors either did not know what they were writing about; or that they did not honeſtly and fairly report it. This Part of the Queſtion has been largely diſcuſſed in the late Controverſy with Mr. *Woolſton*; and the Hiſtory of the *Reſurrection*, in particular, has been ſo fully juſtified by two eminent Writers[r], as to make it perfectly needleſs for me to ſay any thing to it at preſent. Laying aſide then this Prejudice, let us attend to the general Character of the Apoſtles; in which there is nothing that would lead one to ſuſpect them as guilty of unfair dealing, but much to perſuade us of the contrary. They were plain, artleſs Men; their Principles were ſtrictly moral; their Conduct clear of all juſt Imputation; and the things which they report (extraordinary as they are) are not reported as having been done in Corners, but openly and in the Face of the World. Theſe are the Circumſtances upon which the Faith of all Hiſtory ſtands; and if we had nothing to ſay of the Apoſtles more than this, it would be very hard to aſſign a good Reaſon why their Teſtimony is not to be received. But the ſtrong Circumſtance which

[r] The preſent Lord Biſhop of *London*, and Mr. *Weſt*.

diſtin-

diſtinguiſhes their Teſtimony from all other human Teſtimony is this, that here was a new Doctrine, a new Religion, raiſed upon the Credit of theſe Facts, which the Apoſtles embraced and profeſſed, not only without all preſent Encouragement from worldly Advantages, but in utter Renunciation of them all; under the manifeſt Peril of their Lives, which they were all ready to ſacrifice, and which many of them did actually ſacrifice, for the Goſpel ſake. It is, I ſay, upon this Circumſtance, that the Weight of the Apoſtles Teſtimony principally reſts; and I am under no doubt that this was at leaſt one very great Reaſon why it pleaſed God that his Church ſhould be founded upon the Blood of Martyrs, that their Patience and Conſtancy might ſtand as a Teſtimony to future Ages, of the Truth and Certainty of the things which they were to record. I think our Saviour intimates as much, *Luke* xxi. 13. where having mentioned the Perſecutions which his Apoſtles were to ſuffer for his Name's ſake, he adds—*and it ſhall turn unto you for a* TESTIMONY. But becauſe Unbelievers are wont to make light of this Circumſtance, and the Author of the *Free*

Enquiry

Enquiry has given countenance to the Contempt too often thrown upon it, by laying it down univerſally, and without any kind of Diſtinction, that "Martyrdom ought "not to give any additional Weight to the "Authority of a Chriſtian Witneſs[s];" it will be neceſſary to ſee how this Matter ſtands. And I think we need only to place the Argument upon its true Bottom, to make the Force of it felt by every common Underſtanding.

It muſt be remembered then, that the Argument goes upon a Suppoſition already proved and not to be denied, that if the ſeveral Circumſtances under which the Apoſtles have recorded our Saviour's Miracles be true, they could not poſſibly have *themſelves* been deceived; and that the Queſtion is now reduced to the ſingle Point of their *Veracity*. Which Obſervation diſcharges from the preſent Queſtion the ſingle Reaſon offered by the Author, in ſupport of his general Aſſertion, that "Martyrdom gives no addi-"tional Weight to the Authority of a "Chriſtian Witneſs:" For thus he argues: "Martyrdom—adds nothing to the Cha-

[s] *Free Inquiry*, p. 200.

"racter

" racter of [a Man's] *Knowledge* or *Saga-*
" *city*; nor consequently any Weight to
" [his] Testimony, in preference to that
" of any other just and devout Christian
" whatsoever [t]." What has *Knowledge* and *Sagacity* to do in a Case, in which it is *supposed* impossible that a Man could be deceived? If it were an agreed Point, that the Apostles might have been so imposed upon, as to have believed that *Christ* wrought Miracles when in reality he wrought none; it shall be granted, that their suffering Martyrdom is no Evidence, as to the *Fact*, whether *Christ* wrought Miracles or not; for Men may suffer, and often have suffered, Martyrdom for false Opinions as well as for true ones. But taking it for granted, I say, that the Apostles could not have been deceived as to the Facts by them reported, their suffering Martyrdom will be Evidence for the Truth of such Facts, as I will now endeavour to shew.

It must be admitted then in the first place, that the Constancy of the Apostles gives full Proof of *their own* Conviction, that *Christ*

[t] Ibid. p. 213.

was

was a Prophet, and his Doctrine the Will and Law of God. For as Men we must suppose them to have had the common Sentiments of Men; and that therefore it was impossible for them to expose themselves to Persecution and Death, but upon some Motive that was sufficient to outweigh the present Sufferings. What should this Motive be? Suppose them to have been persuaded, that *Christ* came to them in the Name and by the Authority of God, and you have it plainly before you. *Every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father or Mother, or Wife or Children, or Lands, for my Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and inherit* EVERLASTING LIFE. *Matt.* xix. 29. To forego a present Good, to receive by and by an hundredfold; to give up the Advantages of this short and perishing State, in order to obtain an everlasting Inheritance in a State yet to come, is undoubtedly a very reasonable Conduct. But if these were vain Promises (and such they must to them have appeared, if they had not believed *Christ* to have been a true Prophet) the Motive was lost; and they acted a Part of

which no Hiſtory affords an Example. It is too common a Caſe for Men to act inſincerely to *ſave* to themſelves the Advantages of this World; but to ſuppoſe that any one ſhould be willing to give up Life, and all the Advantages of it, merely for the ſake of telling a Lye, or upon ſome future Proſpect in which he hath no Confidence himſelf; is a Contradiction to all that we know and feel of what is human. In common Caſes, if a Man ſhould lay a Wager of Half a Crown, you would not thence conclude him to be in the right, but you would certainly believe him to be in earneſt. Will you believe a Man to be in earneſt when he ſtakes a Trifle, and will you not believe the Apoſtles to have been in earneſt when they riſqued their ALL! *Lo!* (ſay they) *we have left all and followed thee*—What did they follow him for? *Something* they expected in the way of Recompence; for they preſently cry out—*What ſhall we have therefore?* Matt. xix. 27. It is not unlikely that when the Apoſtles aſked this Queſtion, they had a View to ſome earthly Reward; for their firſt Notion of *Chriſt's* Kingdom was that it ſhould be *temporal*. But this makes

no

no Difference in the Argument; for ſtill it muſt be ſuppoſed that they believed in *Chriſt*, whoſe Word, if he was not what he pretended to be, could have been no Security for any Reward whether temporal or ſpiritual. But their Maſter told them, and Experience ſoon convinced them, that there was nothing for them to hope for in this World; yet ſtill they follow him to the Loſs of all things, and even unto Death itſelf; and if this will not prove that they believed in *Chriſt*, no Conduct in the World can ſhew any Man's Belief. It hath all the Strength of Evidence that human Nature can poſſibly give.

Thus far then we go upon ſafe Grounds; and it appears by the Conduct of the Apoſtles, that they muſt have been *themſelves* fully ſatisfied of the Truth of *Chriſt's* Pretenſions, that he was a Prophet of God, and in conſequence of this Aſſurance, had the firmeſt Reliance upon the Promiſes that were offered to Mankind by the Goſpel. The Author of the *Free Enquiry* conſents to this. For ſpeaking of the primitive Chriſtians, he confeſſes that "the Circumſtances of their [ſuffering] "Martyr-

"Martyrdom gave the STRONGEST "PROOF of the SINCERITY of their "FAITH, and TRUST in the Promiſes of "the Goſpel[u]." It is with great Reaſon that he ſays this; for no other Cauſe can be adequate to ſuch an Effect; and all the Motives[x] which he hath induſtriouſly ſuggeſted (ſeemingly) in Diſparagement of this Conduct, reſolve themſelves at laſt into this one Principle, that the Goſpel, both by the Martyrs themſelves, and by all the Chriſtian World about them, was moſt firmly believed to be true.—Here then ariſes a very material Queſtion: How came the Apoſtles by this *firm Perſuaſion*, that *Chriſt* was ſent of God, and that great Prophet whom the ancient Prophets had foretold? The Point lies quite out of the way of all *natural* Inquiry; from *natural* Principles therefore they could not have had it. Nor could they have had it from any *religious* Principles, as formed merely upon the Authority of their own Books. In Chriſtian Countries where the Scriptures are read, it frequently happens, that Men take up Opinions from their own private Inter-

[u] Ibid. p. 213. [x] See p. 200 to 212.

pretations,

pretations, in which they are ſo fully convinced that they are in the right, that they would (many of them) lay down their Lives rather than give up their Opinions. But this, I ſay, could not have been the Caſe of the Apoſtles, in reſpect of their Faith in *Chriſt* as the Meſſiah. For their Hiſtory (to which, in the preſent Argument, we challenge no greater Regard than is due to any common Hiſtory) ſhews, that when *Chriſt* firſt appeared, they were full of the common Prejudices of their Countrymen in this reſpect; which were as oppoſite to the Pretenſions of *Chriſt* as Light is to Darkneſs. What was it then (I aſk) that bore down this Weight of Prejudice, and convinced them that *Chriſt's* Pretenſions were true? Moſt plainly (for it could be nothing elſe) it was the *Evidence* which *Chriſt* gave of his divine Miſſion by the Miracles which he wrought. By this it was, that all were convinced, who were at firſt convinced. Our Saviour challenged their Attention upon this Evidence, *John* xiv. 11. *Believe me for the Works ſake.* *Nicodemus* declares himſelf convinced by this Evidence; *Rabbi, we know that thou art*

art a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do thoſe Miracles that thou doſt, except God be with him. John iii. 2. And ſo the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*, found the *Truſt* they had, that *Chriſt* was *he that ſhould have redeemed Iſrael*, in this, that he *was a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the People.* Luke xxiv. 19. 21. Lay then the whole Matter together (if you pleaſe) thus—The Conſtancy of the Apoſtles ſhews their firm Reliance upon the Hopes of the Goſpel; this implies their full Conviction of the Truth of the Evidence upon which they had received the Goſpel; and this Evidence having been founded in plain Matters of Fact, in which they could not be deceived, *i. e.* in the Miracles which they ſaw wrought by *Jeſus Chriſt*; the ſame Conſtancy which ſhews the Sincerity of their Faith, will likewiſe prove the Truth of the Miracles; and the Evidence will come with the greater Force, in proportion as a Man's ſuffering for his Opinions is a better Evidence of his Sincerity, than the ſimple Character of an honeſt Man.

Thus ſtood the Caſe with reſpect to the Apoſtles. They ſuffered for a Faith which *could* have had no other Foundation, than thoſe Miracles which they ſaw with their Eyes; which creates ſuch a *Connexion* between the *Sincerity* of their Faith, and the *Truth* of the *Facts* upon which their Faith was grounded, that if you admit one you muſt admtt both. This Conſideration opens a great Difference between the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles for the Truth of *Chriſt's* Miracles, and the Teſtimony of many other primitive Martyrs for the Truth of Miracles by them reported to have been wrought in After-times. For theſe are ſeldom ſo diſtinctly related, that we may be ſecure, that the Relators themſelves might not have been impoſed upon; and thoſe of them which ſeem to be moſt unexceptionable, ſtill differ in this Circumſtance, that they were not the *Foundation* upon which the Faith of the Martyrs ſtood. If there were any Miracles wrought in later times (of which, notwithſtanding what has been attempted to prove the contrary, I muſt beg leave to ſay there is great Appearance)

pearance) such Miracles would serve for the greater Confirmation of the Faith, as they were visible Instances of that Power which was manifested in *Christ*. But the Faith of those times did not *principally* rest upon such Miracles, but upon the Miracles wrought by *Christ* and his Apostles, as they stood recorded in the New Testament; which would have been a sufficient Foundation if no other Miracles had been wrought afterwards. These primitive Martyrs then, having a *Foundation* for their Religion, as Christians, *distinct* from the Miracles of their own times, it is easy to be conceived, that, as Miracles wrought in favour of a Religion do Honour to that Religion; those who had embraced the Gospel upon the Credit of the Scripture Miracles, might possibly have been ready enough to admit and give countenance to Stories of later Miracles, which stood upon no sufficient Authority; for which Reason there will be no necessary Connection between the Sincerity of *their* Faith (which is all that their Martyrdom directly proves) and the Truth of the Miracles by them reported. But if the Miracles wrought by *Christ* had not

been true, the Apoſtles, who had no *other* Foundation for their Faith, could have had *none*; which yet their conſtant, patient Suffering for *Chriſt's* ſake, plainly ſhews that they had.

Whether there were or were not any Miracles wrought after the Days of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, is no Part of the preſent Argument. But this I confeſs, that the many idle and ridiculous Stories about Miracles, that are to be met with in the Writings of ſome of the Fathers, are both a Reproach to themſelves, and a Diſcredit to the Cauſe of Religion in general. Thoſe who love to place their Characters in the moſt unfavourable Light, will charge them with Diſhoneſty; for which however I have not yet ſeen any ſufficient Proof. But the ſobereſt and moſt candid Writers have not been able to excuſe them (as, in Truth, they are not to be excuſed) from great Credulity in this reſpect: And what is there ſo natural as for thoſe Unbelievers, who having no Inclination to go to the Bottom of the Queſtion, are willing to ſatisfy themſelves with a ſhort Anſwer, to ſay—"Look "here! By your own Confeſſion, Num-

"bers

" bers of Miracles have been reported to " have been wrought, and have obtained " Credit in the World, which yet had no- " thing to ſupport them but the *mere Cre-* " *dulity* of thoſe who reported them and " thoſe who received them; and why " might not this have been the Caſe in " the times of *Chriſt* and the Apoſtles?" The Author of the *Free Enquiry* has given too much handle to this ſort of Reaſoning, by ſaying, that " the princi- " pal Fathers of the fourth [Century] were " LESS CREDULOUS than their Predeceſſors " of the earlier Ages[y]." From whence ſomebody or other may be ready enough to draw this Inference—therefore *leſs Regard* is to be paid to Reports of Miracles by the Writers of the *preceding* Centuries, than to the like Reports from Writers of the *fourth*; not excepting even the Apoſtolic Age, as the Author excepts it not. He does not tell us upon what Grounds he aſſerts, that the Fathers of the *fourth* Century were leſs credulous upon the Point of Miracles than their Predeceſſors of the *earlier* Ages; and the Reaſon of the Caſe car-

[y] *Introd. Diſc.* p. 37.

ries it the other way. For if Credulity begets Miracles; where Credulity moſt abounds, Miracles ſhould moſt abound. But, contrary to this, the Fact is, that the Miracles recorded by the Fathers of the ſecond and third Centuries, bear no proportion in number to thoſe that are recorded by the Fathers of the fourth and fifth. And is not the reaſon clear? Credulity is ever attended with ſome favourite Prejudice, which breeds and nouriſhes it. Men are not credulous *againſt* themſelves, or their own Opinions. Miracles wrought in favour of Chriſtianity, are (as I have ſaid) an Honour to Chriſtianity; and conſequently till Chriſtianity got into ſome Reputation, Credulity could do nothing towards giving Credit to falſe Miracles. During the ſecond and third Centuries, the Church was under Perſecutions; and Chriſtianity had Credit only among the few that profeſſed it. In the Beginning of the fourth, Chriſtianity gained the Eſtabliſhment of human Laws, and had all the Reputation that Authority and Faſhion could give it. Within this Century likewiſe many Corruptions had grown up. Martyrs and Saints began to be

be treated with an Honour little leſs than idolatrous, to which the Miracles ſaid to have been wrought at their Tombs, or by their Reliques, though it did not give a ſufficient *Sanction*, gave, no doubt, great *Countenance* with many. Monkery had likewiſe ſpread itſelf far and wide; and the Fame which theſe Recluſes had for their great Sanctity, prepared the Multitude greedily to ſwallow whatever extraordinary Matters, Minds almoſt diſtracted [z] by Faſt-

[z] Mr. *Tournefort*, ſpeaking of the modern *Aſceticks*, or *Hermits*, of the *Greek* Church, ſays, "that the "great Auſterities them practiſed, joined to a per- "petual Solitude, very often turn their Brains; and "that by little and little their Heads grow ſo full of "Viſions, that they are little better than diſtracted." *Voyage to the Levant*, Vol. I. p. 84. One may eaſily ſuppoſe this to have been the Caſe of *Antony*, *Hilarion*, and many others.

"If a Patient grows light-headed [in a Fever] he is "preſently looked upon as poſſeſſed by the Devil; the "Phyſicians and Surgeons are diſmiſſed, and the *Pa-* "*pa's* ſent for to exorciſe him, who fall to repeating "I know not what Prayers, and almoſt drown the "Patient with Holy Water.——At *Mycone* a Woman "was ſick—whom they threatened to bury quick, if "ſhe did not declare the Name of the Demon that "poſſeſſed her.———The Iſſue was—ſhe died con-

ings, and Watchings, and Auſterities of various other kinds, might fancy to themſelves. Theſe Conſiderations will pretty well account for the great Noiſe of Miracles that prevailed in thoſe Ages; in which if now and then a Miracle was wrought (for I ſhall not preſume to ſay, becauſe I ſee no Reaſon to ſay, that abſolutely none were wrought) Numbers of idle and groundleſs Reports of a like ſort might haſtily gain Credit, as, we daily ſee, it happens in other Caſes. But all this will nothing affect the Apoſtolic Age, when Credulity had nothing to work upon; the Prejudices, the Paſſions, and the Intereſts, as well of thoſe who reported the Miracles of *Chriſt*, as of thoſe to whom they were reported, lying not in favour of Chriſtianity, but in Oppoſition to it. In ſhort, there is a wide Difference, in this reſpect, between Miracles when offered to our Belief as the *Foundation* of a Religion yet to be taken up; and Miracles when offered to our Belief in favour of a Religion *already embraced* and

" vulſed; but whenever any one recovers in ſuch a " Caſe, the People cry—*a Miracle!* and the *Papa's* " go for Wonder-workers." *Id. ibid.* p. 134.

profeſſed.

profeſſed. In this latter Caſe, whatever comes in Aid to Religion, flatters our preconceived Opinions, and is apt to be admitted ſometimes upon ſlender Authority. But in the former, nothing will convince reaſonable Men but the ſtrongeſt Evidence of Fact, eſpecially if any thing is to be loſt by ſuch Profeſſion; which was eminently the Caſe of the Apoſtles, and firſt Chriſtians, to whom their Religion was the Loſs of every thing.

There is one Circumſtance more, which gives a Degree of Authority to the Miracles of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, which few Miracles of later Ages can challenge, *viz.* that they were all wrought openly, in the Face of the World, among the *Jews*, the profeſſed and moſt bitter Enemies to *Chriſt's* Pretenſions, who, it may be preſumed, were not wanting in any Endeavours to convict him of Impoſture, if they had been able to have done it, and which if they had effectually done, he muſt have fell into univerſal Contempt. Some of the earlieſt Miracles after *Chriſt*, whilſt the Church was yet under Perſecution, may perhaps claim the Benefit

Benefit of this Plea (for ſome of the ancient Apologiſts make bold Appeals in their Writings) and ſo far as they *can*, I ſee no Reaſon why they ſhould not be admitted. But after the whole *Roman* Empire became Chriſtian, the Caſe was altered greatly. The Miracles then wrought muſt have been wrought not in the Face of *Enemies*, but (chiefly at leaſt) among *Friends*; ſome of which (when Superſtition began to prevail againſt common Honeſty) might be diſpoſed to *invent* or *contrive*, what the Credulity of others made them ready to believe and propagate.

But let thus much ſuffice for the preſent on this Head, and let us go on to another Obſervation, not leſs material, which is, that as the Goſpel wants not the Aid of any Miracles of later times to eſtabliſh its Authority; ſo neither will the Suppoſition of Miracles, wrought ſince *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, eſtabliſh any Doctrines or Practices as of divine Authority, *other* than thoſe which are contained in the holy Scriptures: Which is a proper Caution to thoſe, who, believing the Miracles of later Ages, but ſeeing the Falſhood

hood of many Doctrines then received in the Church; may think this a Diſparagement to the Evidence from Miracles, as offered by *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles. For it may be aſked—If admitting the Miracles of later Ages, you yet renounce the Doctrines of theſe Ages; why, admitting the Miracles of *Chriſt*, are you bound to receive the Doctrines of *Chriſt?* It will be neceſſary to take this Point into Conſideration; eſpecially as the Author now before us has advanced, that if we allow Miracles to have been wrought in the corrupted Ages of the Church, we muſt take the Corruptions along with them; and I hope to do it in ſuch a way, as to ſave both the Credit of Miracles, conſidered as Evidence for *Chriſt's* Doctrines; and the Credit of Hiſtory too, ſo far as upon other Accounts it may appear to deſerve Credit.

And in the firſt place, I ſee no cauſe to depart from what I have formerly advanced, *viz.* that "it is never reaſonable to "conſider the Miracles wrought in any "Age, as Confirmations of the concurrent "Uſages or Doctrines of that Age, unleſs "there

" there be ſome Circumſtance which ſpeci-
" fies the Intention of the Worker, and
" ſhews that the Miracles are meant to
" anthoriſe ſuch Uſages or Doctrines[a]."
Becauſe, as various Ends or Purpoſes may be conceived, why a Miracle may be wrought, if there be nothing to ſhew preciſely *what* the End is, nothing certain can be concluded. When a Perſon comes in the Name of God, and publiſhes a Doctrine as from him; a Power of working Miracles attendant upon ſuch Pretenſion, muſt be conſtrued as an Atteſtation of that Doctrine; the Pretenſion itſelf ſufficiently pointing out the Uſe of the Miracle. And as this was the Caſe of *Moſes*, who began with opening his Commiſſion to the People of *Iſrael*, *The Lord God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob, hath ſent me unto you*[b]; ſo it was alſo the Caſe of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles. *Chriſt* came in *his Father's Name*, and his Miſſion was publickly declared by a Voice from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.*

[a] *Obſ. on Dr. M.'s Introductory Diſc.* p. 8.
[b] *Exod.* iii. 15. comp. with Chap. iv. 30.

Matt.

Matt. iii. 17. The Apoſtles were ſent under the Aids of the Holy Ghoſt; and their Miſſion was alſo declared by *Chriſt*, to whom they were appointed Succeſſors in the prophetic Office, in as full and ample a manner as he himſelf had been ſent of the Father. *As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you.* John xx. 21. In conſequence hereof, all the Miracles wrought by theſe Prophets, in the Execution of their reſpective Miſſions, were Atteſtations of the Matters by them delivered and declared to be the Will and Law of God. But had neither *Moſes*, nor *Chriſt*, nor his Apoſtles, declared or publiſhed any thing *in the Name* of God, nor pretended to any Authority or Commiſſion from him; the Miracles which they wrought would have been no Vouchers for the Truth of any Opinions by them held, or Uſages by them obſerved and maintained; becauſe there would in ſuch a caſe be room to ſuppoſe, that thoſe miraculous Powers might have been granted for ſome other Purpoſes, ſubſervient to the Benefit of particular Men, or to the general Ends of Providence[c].

[c] Compare this with what has been ſaid above, upon the general Subject of Miracles.

To

To ſhew that I am not ſingular in this Opinion, I will give you the Senſe of two very able Writers. The firſt is Mr. *Locke*, who ſays, that "divine Revelation receives "Teſtimony from no other Miracles, but "ſuch as are wrought to witneſs HIS "MISSION from God, who delivers the "Revelation. All other Miracles that are "done in the World, how many or great "ſoever, Revelation is not concerned in." Hence he rejects all the Miracles wrought in the Heathen World, as of no Uſe in Revelation. For (proceeds he) "I do not "remember any Miracles recorded in the "*Greek* or *Roman* Writers, as done to con-"firm any one's Miſſion and Doctrine— "For though there were here and there "ſome Pretences to Revelation, yet there "were not ſo much as Pretences to Mira-"cles that atteſted it[d]." But moſt full to this point is Biſhop *Fleetwood*, who ſpeaking of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, whom ſome of the ancient heathen Writers confronted to *Jeſus Chriſt*; and having (for Argument's ſake) admitted the Truth of the Miracles

[d] *Diſc. on Miracles.*

reported

reported of him by *Philoſtratus*; aſks— "What will follow? That *Apollonius's* Religion is true? What was it? Where is it to be found? Give us an Account of the Theology he taught and deſigned to plant and propagate. No ſuch thing appears, even in *Philoſtratus*." He goes on and ſays farther—"If you will believe *Philoſtratus*, he [*Apollonius*] wrought many Miracles, but he valued himſelf nothing on this account, but attributed them all to God; and ſays no more, than that ſo many People as were the Subjects of his Miracles were benefited by them. He wrought none to teſtify that any God had ſent him; and he drew no Conſequences in favour of any thing he had ſaid, from any thing he had done. He called not upon his Works, to prove the Truth of his Miſſion or his Doctrine [e]." From hence the Biſhop's Argument is, that admitting *Apollonius's* Miracles, they cannot ſtand in Derogation to the Miracles of *Jeſus Chriſt*; becauſe *Apollonius* pretending to no divine Miſſion, his Miracles eſtabliſhed nothing. The Reaſoning holds in

[e] *Eſſay on Miracles*, p. 131—133.

all

all like Caſes, and may be applied, and ought to be applied, to all the living Men who are reported to have wrought Miracles in the Chriſtian Church, ſince the Days of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles; who not appearing in the Character of *extraordinary* Meſſengers from God, but at moſt as Perſons authoriſed to miniſter in the Church, *built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt being the head Corner Stone*; ſuch Miracles cannot authorize, as of divine Authority, any Doctrines or Practices, by them held or maintained, which are not eſtabliſhed as ſuch by the *original Commiſſion*, that is, which are not contained in Scripture.

But the Miracles with which we are principally concerned, perhaps, are thoſe which are reported to have been wrought, not by *living Men*, but by mere *material Inſtruments*, as the *Bones* or other *Reliques* of dead Martyrs, the *Sign* of the *Croſs*, conſecrated *Oil*, and the like; concerning which, the Opinion of the Author of the *Free Enquiry* is, that if we admit the Miracles to have been wrought, we muſt

admit the ſuperſtitious Worſhip paid to thoſe Inſtruments, as of divine Authority. But upon what reaſonable Foot can this Opinion be maintained? Will the Author pretend to ſay, that the mere Relation of any thing to a Miracle, as its Inſtrument, is a Reaſon why ſuch Inſtrument ought to be worſhipped? In effect he *hath* ſaid it. For having obſerved, that "it was the principal "Devotion of the fourth Century, in all "Caſes of Sickneſs or Diſtreſs, to fly to "the Tombs of the Martyrs; grounded on "a general Perſuaſion, that by proſtrating "themſelves before their Reliques, eſpe- "cially by touching them, they ſhould "find preſent Cure and Relief; and that "great Numbers are affirmed by the Fa- "thers to have been cured in this manner of "all ſorts of Diſeaſes, and ſeveral to have "been raiſed even from the Dead;" he adds—"Now it is certain from the Expe- "rience of all Ages, that the Atteſtation "and Belief of ſuch miraculous Cures "never had any other Effect, or were "underſtood to have any other Mean- "ing, than to imprint an Opinion of a *di-* "*vine Virtue* in the Reliques, AND CON-

"SEQUENTLY TO AUTHORIZE THE "WORSHIP which was paid them[f]." It is moſt infallibly true, that if Miracles were really wrought by Reliques, ſuch Miracles neither had, nor could have had, any other Effect, than to imprint an Opinion of a *divine Virtue* in the Reliques; I mean (as the Author, I ſuppoſe, deſires to be underſtood) in a *popular* way of ſpeaking. For *ſtrictly*, the miraculous Virtue is in *God*, not in the *Relique*, which God uſes an an Inſtrument, not *effective* but *introductive* only; as *Moſes's* Rod, the *Word* or the *Hands* of *Chriſt*, and the like. But the Queſtion is, whether the Suppoſition of a divine Virtue in a Relique, is a Reaſon why that Relique ought to be worſhipped. In the Author's Judgment it ſhould ſeem ſo to be. For the *Authority* of the *Worſhip* ſtands manifeſtly connected with the *divine Virtue* ſuppoſed to be in the Relique, as a *Conſequence* from its *Principle*; though whether his Meaning is, that it is a Conſequence founded in the Nature and Reaſon of the thing, or in the Opinion of Mankind only, may be queſtioned; for the

[f] *Remarks on Obſervations*, &c. p. 22.

Turn of the Expreſſion is ſomewhat ambiguous. What occurs a few Lines after, may perhaps help to explain it. For he ſays, that "the Worſhip [of Reliques]— "MUST FOR EVER FOLLOW the Belief of "ſuch Cures." Why *muſt* it follow, and *for ever* follow, unleſs it be becauſe the one is a juſt and rational Concluſion from the other? But let the Author challenge which Senſe he pleaſes, there is no Truth in what he ſays. For as to any juſt, *legitimate* Conſequence, that, becauſe Miracles are wrought by Reliques as Inſtruments, therefore thoſe Reliques may be worſhipped, there is plainly none. You may as well ſay, that becauſe Miracles are wrought by *Men* as Inſtruments, therefore thoſe *Men* may be worſhipped. But even the Heathens at *Lyſtra* did not draw ſuch a ſenſeleſs Inference as this. They would have worſhipped *Paul* and *Barnabas* when they ſaw the Cure that they wrought upon the lame Man; but it was becauſe they thought them to be *Gods in the Likeneſs of Men*, Acts xiv. 11. Again, as to *Fact*; it is not true what the Author ſo roundly and poſitively aſſerts, that "the Worſhip of

" [Reliques or ſuch like Inſtruments] did " *immediately* follow the Belief of Cures " wrought by them." All Hiſtory is againſt him in this Point. In the Old Teſtament we find that a *dead Man* was *raiſed to Life* again, by *touching the Bones of Eliſha*[g]. But we no where read, that theſe Bones were ever worſhipped. So *Moſes's* brazen Serpent wrought Cures[h]; yet was it no Idol in *Moſes's* time, nor for ſome hundreds of Years after. Again, in the Days of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, Cures were wrought by touching the *Hem*, or *Border*, of our Saviour's Garment; and by *Handkerchiefs*, or *Aprons*, carried to the Sick from the Body of *Paul*[i]; yet were not *Garments*, or *Aprons*, or *Handkerchiefs* worſhipped. Further yet; does not the Author know, that the Opinion of a *divine Virtue* in *the Sign of the Croſs* was much older than *Croſs Worſhip?* Does he not tell us himſelf, " that it was thought a " ſure Preſervative againſt all ſorts of Ma- " lignity, Poiſons, *&c.* and that it is affirm-

[g] 2 *Kings* xiii. 21. [h] *Numb.* xxi. 9. 2 *Kings* xviii. 4. [i] *Matt.* ix 20. *Acts* xix. 12.

" ed,

" ed, by the principal Fathers of the fourth " Century, to have wrought many illuſtri- " ous Miracles [k]?" And yet he does not pretend to charge it upon the fourth Century, that they *worſhipped* the Croſs. Laſtly; does he not ſay, that from *Tertullian's* and *Cyprian's* Days, the *conſecrated Bread* " began to work Miracles, and was carried " by People in their Journeys and Voyages, " as an Amulet or Charm, to ſecure them " from all Dangers both by Sea and Land?" And yet it is well known, that the *Worſhip* of the ſacramental Elements did not come in till many Centuries after. Almoſt all Corruptions work by Degrees; and ſo did that particular Corruption of which we are now ſpeaking. When a divine Virtue to cure Diſeaſes was ſuppoſed to be in any Relique, it is natural to think, that ſuch a Relique would be carefully preſerved, properly depoſited, and treated with all outward Circumſtances of Reſpect. So the primitive Chriſtians treated the Bones of *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, as the Acts of their Martyrdom ſhew. But one of thoſe

[k] *Introd. Diſc.* p. 19.

Acts expresly disclaims [1] *all Worship* paid to Martyrs or their Reliques, and gives it

[1] Οὔτε τὸν χριστὸν ποτε καταλιπεῖν δυνησόμεθα, οὔτε ἕτερόν τινα σέβεσθαι. Τοῦτον μὲν γὰρ υἱὸν ὄντα τοῦ Θεοῦ προσκυνοῦμεν· τοὺς δὲ μάρτυρας ὡς μαθητὰς καὶ μιμητὰς τοῦ Κυρίου ἀγαπῶμεν ἀξίως. Epist. Eccl. Smyrn. de Mart. Polycarp. § 17. If *Jerom* and *Augustine* are to be credited, the Case was the same in their time, for they write exactly in the same Strain. *Non sit nobis Religio cultus hominum mortuorum; quia si pie vixerunt, non sic habentur ut tales quærant Honores: Sed* ILLUM *a nobis coli volunt, quo illuminante, lætantur meriti sui nos esse consortes.* HONORANDI *ergo sunt propter imitationem, non* ADORANDI *propter Religionem.* Augustin. de vera Religione, cap. lv. *Non Martyrum Reliquias*—COLIMUS & ADORAMUS, *ne serviamus Creaturæ potius quam Creatori*——HONORAMUS *autem Reliquias Martyrum ut* EUM CUJUS *sunt Martyres adoremus. Honoramus servos ut honor servorum redundet ad Dominum.* Hieron. ad Vigilantium. The Author of the *Free Enquiry* acknowledges this Passage of *Jerom*, and says, that it "is but the "same trifling Distinction, with which the *Romanists* "defend the same Practices at this Day, and shift off "the Charge of Idolatry which is urged against them." *Postscr.* p. 74. But the Difference is visible. These Fathers, whilst they confess that they *honour* Martyrs, deny that they pay any *religious Worship* to them; which is a plain and sensible Distinction. But the Papists confess that they pay a religious Worship to Martyrs, and justify themselves by distinguishing upon the

(where

(where it ought to be given) to God and his Son *Chriſt* only. It may be difficult to point out the preciſe Steps by which, or the exact Time when, the Reſpect paid to Reliques degenerated into an idolatrous Worſhip; but it is extremely reaſonable to think, that there was a *Gradation* in the thing, and the Author, in effect, confeſſes it. For having obſerved, that "in the Days of the Apoſtles there does "not appear to have been the leaſt "Care, or Thought, about preſerving "any Reliques of the firſt Martyr, *Ste-*"*phen*," he ſays, that "within a few "Years after the Death of St. *John*, the "laſt of the Apoſtles, the Devotion of "the Church BEGAN to take a ſuperſtitious "Turn in this very Article—which Su-"perſtition continued GRADUALLY to "increaſe in proportion [m]," *&c.* And

ſeveral *Degrees*, or *Kinds* of Worſhip; a Diſtinction which *Bellarmine* himſelf confeſſes to have been owing to the Invention of the Schools, long after *Jerom's* and *Auguſtine's* time. *Schola Theologorum excogitavit illam diſtinctionem de latria & dulia.* Tom. ii. Controv. iv. Lib. i. cap. 12.

[m] *Rem. on the Jeſuit Cabal*, p. 118, 120.

though he now maintains, that " Reliques " began to be worſhipped *from the very* " *Moment* in which they firſt began to work " Miracles ;" yet he corrects himſelf in the ſame Sentence, by ſaying a much truer thing, *viz.* that it was not till AFTER that the Reſpect paid to Reliques " was " carried to THAT EXTRAVAGANCE " with which we ſee it practiſed at this " Day in the Church of *Rome*[n] ;" that is, that Reliques were treated as Idols ; for I know of no *greater* Extravagance than this.

It appears then, that the idolizing Reliques, or other material Inſtruments, by which God was pleaſed to work Miracles, was not a Practice which aroſe from the free, unprejudiced Senſe of Mankind ; but that it grew up as Corruptions, and falſe Notions of Worſhip ſprang up and prevailed ; whereof the *Brazen Serpent* is a flagrant Inſtance, which (as I have ſaid) was not worſhipped in the Days of *Moſes*, but in After-ages, when the People were become degenerate and addicted to various

[n] *Rem. on Obſ.* p. 22, 23.

kinds

kinds of Idolatry. Since then the mere *Relation* of an Inſtrument will not ſerve the Purpoſe, we muſt, in order to juſtify the Worſhip paid to ſuch Inſtruments, ſeek for ſome Circumſtance attending the Miracle, which ſhall ſtand as *equivalent* to a *Commiſſion* in Caſes where living Men are the Inſtruments, and which will pin down the Miracle to this particular Uſe and Intention, if ſuch Circumſtance is to be found. The only Circumſtance I can think of at preſent, that ſeems to promiſe any thing, is, that theſe Miracles were wrought *for the Benefit* of thoſe who *actually paid* idolatrous Worſhip to the Inſtruments; and if it could be ſaid, that they were wrought for the Benefit of NONE ELSE, it would be ſomething. But if the Fact be this (and ſo it ſtands upon the Face of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory) that the ſame Miracles which were wrought at firſt for the Benefit of the Church, when no idolatrous Worſhip was paid to theſe Inſtruments, were *continued* only after the Worſhip in the Church was grown to be idolatrous; I ſee not what Conſequence can ariſe, either one way or the other. For the Miracles may

as

as well be pleaded to juſtify the Worſhip *before* it was idolatrous, as well as to juſtify it *after* it was idolatrous; and therefore cannot be pleaded to juſtify either. I ſhall only add, that if any Miracle could be produced ſo circumſtanced, as by neceſſary Conſtruction to authorize idolatrous Worſhip; I ſhould not think it reaſonable, in order to avoid the Doctrine, to deny a Fact ſufficiently atteſted. But I would admit the Fact, and yet reject the Doctrine, by renouncing the POWER by which the Miracle is wrought. I am very ſure that God cannot work a Miracle to authorize Idolatry: But I am not ſure, that he may not permit evil Beings to do it. He did permit evil Beings to deceive the Heathen World; and that he might not permit them to do the like in the Chriſtian World, is more than we have ſufficient Warrant to ſay.

It may ſeem perhaps, to ſome, reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that if ſuch Miracles as theſe really were wrought whilſt the Chriſtian Worſhip continued in its primitive Purity, God would have withdrawn them when the Church began to grow idolatrous;

trous ; eſpecially conſidering that (whether reaſonably or unreaſonably) it is in fact true, that many Chriſtians *did* take a *Handle* from theſe Cures to juſtify themſelves in their Idolatries ; and a Conſideration it is that ſhould make us ſcrupulous to admit Reports of ſuch Miracles, without ſufficient Proof. But I do not think it ſufficient to ſhew ſuch Miracles to be abſolutely incredible, or impoſſible ; becauſe we are not ſo well acquainted with the Methods of God's Providence, and the Reaſons upon which he acts, as to be able to ſay with any Certainty, how far it may be fit for him to go in miniſtring to us the Occaſions of Sin. It is a Rule of human Conduct, founded in common Senſe, and ſtrengthened by the Authority of the Goſpel, that we are not to throw *Stumbling-blocks* in one another's Way ; that is, not *needleſly* ; not *without Reaſon :* For if, upon the whole of my Conduct taken together, it appears reaſonable and fit for me to do a thing, I am not bound to forbear, though I were ſure that by my doing it, another Man would take occaſion to do ſome bad thing. We muſt not deny that Liberty to God which

we

we think it reaſonable to make uſe of ourſelves, but allow him to remove or to continue, to ſuffer or not to ſuffer, what is, or may prove, offenſive, as ſeems moſt ſuitable to the general Views of his Providence. God could not but foreſee that the Cures wrought by the *Brazen Serpent* would afterwards prove a Snare to the *Iſraelites*; yet were thoſe Cures wrought. And why might not other Cures be wrought by other Inſtruments in the Chriſtian Church, notwithſtanding they were a Snare to Chriſtians? The Reaſons of this Conduct may not appear to us; but it does not follow, that there were none. One thing is certain, that there was an Apoſtaſy to come, when the *Man of Sin* was to be *revealed*, the Seeds of which began early to ſpring up in the Chriſtian Church, till at laſt they produced that whole Maſs of Corruption which we ſee in the Church of *Rome* at this Day. If the Seeds had never been ſown, the Harveſt could never have followed; and how far God might think fit to lend his own Hand in miniſtring the Occaſions that ſhould open the Way to this grand Revolt, that, for the Trial of the Good, for the Puniſh-

Puniſhment of the Bad, and for the Accompliſhment of the Purpoſes of his Providence, the *Myſtery of Iniquity* might *work*, and *the Man of Sin* grow up to full Maturity, to be *deſtroyed* at laſt *by the Breath of* his *Mouth*, and *conſumed by the Brightneſs of his Coming*; how far, I ſay, this might conſiſt with the Wiſdom of Providence, it is impoſſible for us to ſay. It muſt ever be ſuppoſed in ſuch Caſes, that God does not leave himſelf without Witneſs, but that whenever, in the Courſe of his Providence, he miniſters to us the Occaſions of falling, he gives us at the ſame time plain Notices of his Will, that we may ſee our Danger and avoid it. And *are* there, *can* there be, any ſtronger Warnings againſt Idolatry, and even againſt that very Species of Idolatry that is now practiſed in the Church of *Rome*, than are to be found in the Books of the New Teſtament? Or will any one pretend to ſay, that theſe Warnings were not a much ſtronger Evivence *againſt* paying religious Worſhip to Bones or Reliques, than remote Conſtructions and Inferences from their Inſtrumentality in working Miracles, could be *for* it?

The

The Juſtice of God ſurely muſt then ſtand acquitted, in ſuffering (if he thought ſo fit) thoſe who had corrupted themſelves, and ſhut their Eyes againſt this clear and open Day-light, to be led aſide by the Deluſions of their own vain Imaginations; and, when they would not attend to the old Doctrine which had the undoubted Atteſtation of Miracles, to liſten to new Conceits which had it not.

I would not be underſtood as vouching for the Truth of all of this ſort of Miracles that are reported by Eccleſiaſtical Writers, nor indeed of any of them, which (as I have before ſaid) is no part of my Work. What I aim at is, to eſtabliſh a right Rule of Judgment in ſuch Caſes; and the Point I would bring you to at laſt is this, *viz.* To leave the Miracles reported to have been wrought in every Age, and by every Writer, to be tried by their proper Evidence, the Evidence of *Teſtimony*. If you queſtion a Fact, ſhew it to be ill ſupported, and you do ſomething. If you cannot do this, all that you can do elſe will ſignify nothing, unleſs you can ſhew the thing to be

be *impoſſible*; and ſuch Facts, I take it for granted, will always be found ill ſupported. The Author of the *Free Enquiry* could ſee this clearly enough in another Caſe. For, on occaſion of an Objection ſuggeſted againſt him, that if the Character which he has given of the ancient Fathers be true, the Authority of the Books of the New Teſtament, which were tranſmitted to us through their Hands, will be rendered precarious and uncertain; he is even willing to admit the Conſequence, and gives this Reply, that "it will not follow from thence that the "Character muſt be falſe, and that the "Fathers were neither crafty nor credu-"lous—becauſe (ſays he) the Craft and "Credulity which are charged upon them, "muſt be determined by ANOTHER ſort "of Evidence; not by CONSEQUENCES "but by FACTS; and if the Charge be "confirmed by theſe, it muſt be admitted "as true, how far ſoever the Conſequences "may reach [o]." Is it not very ſtrange, that this Writer ſhould lay ſo much Streſs upon *Conſequences*, when *Corruptions* only are in queſtion; and be ſo perfectly careleſs about

[o] *Free Enquiry*, p. 192.

them

them when *Foundations* are at Stake! He does not care to allow that there were any Miracles wrought in the fourth Century, becauſe, if there were, they would eſtabliſh Popery. He maintains on the contrary, that the Fathers were crafty or credulous, and will ſtand to it, it ſeems, though the Conſequence ſhould be the *Ruin* of Chriſtianity! For his *Conduct*, I leave him to account to the Public. To his Argument, I ſay it is *right*. Facts have their proper Evidence; and if a thing be proved true in fact, all the Conſequences of the World will not ſhew it to be falſe. But why have not I as good right to this Maxim as he? If he will ſay, it does not follow that the Fathers were not Knaves, becauſe, if they were ſo, the Authority of the Scriptures muſt fail; why may not I as well ſay, It does not follow that no Miracles were wrought in this or thatCentury, becauſe, if any were wrought, the Authority of Popery will be eſtabliſhed? The Conſequence is good in neither caſe; for the Appeal lies to Fact and to Teſtimony in both, and there I ſhall leave it; and as the Author is, I think, well rid of the Conſequence charged upon him in regard to.

to Chriſtianity; ſo, I truſt, we ſhall as well rid ourſelves of the Conſequence charged by him againſt us, with reſpect to Popery; to overthrow which, we have no occaſion to deſtroy the Credit of all Miracles wrought or ſaid to have been wrought ſince *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles; we only deſire to have (what we have) the Word of God as contained in Scripture, and the Faith of the earlieſt Ages of Chriſtianity, to ſtand as a Teſtimony againſt her Corruptions. This is the ſafe Remedy which has ſerved us, and ever will ſerve us; and which we ſhall be excuſed, I hope, if we prefer to quack Preſcriptions, which, if they eaſe us a little in one Point, will diſtreſs us in many.

I have excepted one kind of hiſtorical Relations, as uncapable of being ſupported by any Evidence; and they are ſuch as report *Impoſſibilities*. It is not unlikely that the Species of Miracles we are now ſpeaking of, may appear to many in that light But for my own part, I am, I confeſs, ſo weak, as not to be able to ſee a good Reaſon, why it is not as credible, that God

might *often* do honour to his Martyrs under the New Teſtament, by imparting a miraculous Virtue to their Bones or Reliques; as that he *once* imparted the ſame Virtue to the Bones of a Prophet under the Old. Thoſe who are not Friends to Revelation may, it is likely, have no more Faith in the one than they have in the other; and may laugh when they hear us talk of Miracles wrought by "the rotten Bones and "Duſt of the Martyrs; or a Rag of their "old Cloths; a Drop of Water or Oil; a "Bit of Bread; the Chip of an old Croſs, "or the Figure of a new one[p]." But I would adviſe no *Chriſtian* to be too free upon this Subject, leſt he ſhould be aſked, —"Why not by theſe, as well as by a "Rod; by a Mantle; by Handkerchiefs; "by Aprons; or by Clay made with Spit-"tle?" To thoſe who are diſpoſed to take Offence at theſe things, the Anſwer is ſhort and plain—The Inſtruments are indeed *mean*; but the Power of God, which it is the Intention of the Miracle to ſhew, is not therefore the *leſs*, but the *more* conſpicuous.

[p] *Rem. on Obſ.* p. 19.

I now

I now take my leave of this Author, and of the Argument: having (as I hope) ſufficiently eſtabliſhed the Authority of *Chriſt's* Miſſion, upon the concurrent Evidence both of Prophecy and Miracles. But here a Scruple may ariſe, —If it be ſo clear a Point that *Jeſus* was a Prophet ſent from God; how came it to paſs that he was rejected by the *Jews*, and the greater Part of the Heathen Nations, to whom the Apoſtles preached? And how comes it to paſs, that ſo many reject it now, even among thoſe who have been bred up in the Chriſtian Faith? This Scruple, I apprehend, may have great Weight to prejudice many againſt the Goſpel, who are not either able or willing to go to the Bottom of the Evidence themſelves; and therefore it is fit I ſhould ſay ſomething to it. *Of the Cauſes of Infidelity.*

As a Balance on the other ſide, it might be aſked—If the Goſpel is a Fiction or an Invention of Men, unſupported by ſufficient Evidence of its coming from God; how came it to paſs that *ſo many* received

it, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as *did* receive it? The Goſpel aroſe from ſmall Beginnings, as almoſt all great Changes do; bnt it prevailed at laſt, not by the Aids of human Power or Policy, but by the meaneſt Inſtruments, againſt the united Efforts of both. What Account is to be given of this? Is there ſuch an Inſtance beſides in all Hiſtory? Theſe are fair Queſtions; and if there is any Difficulty in anſwering them (as, I think, there is much) it will be Proof ſufficient to ſhew, that there are ſome things hard to be accounted for, which are not therefore to be rejected as falſe.—But as to the preſent Doubt, I think that our Saviour has given us the true Solution of it in thoſe Words, John iii. 19. *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World; and Men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil.* In which Words he plainly intimates, that the Cauſe why many rejected him, was not that he had not given ſufficient Proof of his divine Miſſion (for had this been the Caſe, the *Light* had ſtill been but *Darkneſs*, nor would thoſe who rejected him have deſerved *Condemnation)* but it was that

that the Evidence was defeated by the Corruption of their Hearts. The Goſpel was a Call to Repentance; the Means of Reformation: But many were inſeparably attached to their Vices, and hated to be reformed; and ſuch as theſe received it not. *Every one* (ſays our Saviour) *that doth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reproved*, ver. 20. St. *Paul* has a Paſſage exactly to the ſame Purpoſe, 2 *Cor.* iv. 3, 4. *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt; in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, leſt the Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt ſhould ſhine upon them.*

The Suppoſition that lies at the Bottom of this Reaſoning is, that admitting the Goſpel Evidence to be full and ſufficient; it is nevertheleſs very poſſible, that the Effect may be loſt through the Influence of an evil and corrupted Mind. And there is nothing more certain. For we ſee in other Caſes, that the Judgments of Men are very much determined by their Paſſions, and their Prejudices, and their particular

Ways, and Habits of thinking. There are some Truths to which a Man cannot help assenting. Of this kind are all Truths evident of themselves to Reason or to our Senses; as, that the Whole is greater than a Part; that the Air is hot or cold when we feel its Influence. But when Truth lies not in first Principles, but must be traced out in Consequences and Deductions; where the Understanding must separate, and compound, and compare, and give to every Circumstance its proper Weight; here it is plain that there will be need of Attention, and Discernment, to enable us to judge well; and if wrong Affections, or favourite Notions, interpose to call us off, we shall fall into Mistakes. It is the same thing in the Event, whether a Man has no Understanding, or whether he neglects to make use of it; and partial Consideration implies a Neglect of the Understanding, in a certain Degree, or in a certain Respect. It is this which gives to Passion and Prejudice their great Force, to hinder the Reception of Truth; whilst they make us unattentive to what we dislike, and eager to lay hold of every thing that looks fair and plausible

plauſible on the other Side. It may help to explain this Matter, to look a little into the Conduct of the *Jews*, upon our Saviour's coming to them. The Character he took upon himſelf was that of their *Meſſiah*, *i. e.* of that great Prophet, who, in conſequence of ancient Predictions recorded in their Scriptures, was to come; and the Hiſtory of that Age ſhews, that in the general Opinion of that Nation, the Time of his Appearance was near accompliſhed, when *Chriſt* came in the Fleſh. This was a Circumſtance favouring his Reception. But againſt it lay this great Prejudice; that, as they had been taught to underſtand the ancient Prophecies, the Character of the Prophet that was to come, did not agree with the Character of *Chriſt*. They expected a Prophet that ſhould immediately *reſtore the Kingdom* (*i. e.* the temporal Government) *to Iſrael*; that ſhould gather them from among all the Nations where they were diſperſed; that ſhould break the *Roman* Power by which they were held in Subjection; and make them Lords of the whole Earth. But *Chriſt* plainly told them, that his *Kingdom* was *not of this World*. He had neither

Honour, nor Wealth, nor Power, to offer to his Followers, but Ignominy, and Poverty, and Perſecution, for the Goſpel ſake. Here then was a general Prejudice, which threw in whatever could court the Pride and Ambition of Men, as a Weight againſt the Goſpel Evidence. And how did this Prejudice work? Why, though *Chriſt* did thoſe things among them that no Man ever yet did (even *Moſes*, *in whom* they *truſted*, not excepted) yet they would not believe. It did not blind their Eyes not to ſee the Miracles; but it blinded their Underſtandings ſo, that in them they did not diſcern the Power and Finger of God. When *Chriſt* caſt out Devils, they confeſs the Fact; but their Anſwer is, *This Fellow doth not caſt out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.* This was the only Handle that their Prejudices *could* lay hold of. The Works they ſaw, and could not deny them. But whether theſe Works were the Effect of a divine, or of a diabolical Power, this was a Point that Reaſon and Judgment was to decide; and here their Paſſions and Prepoſſeſſions proved too hard for their Underſtandings. So again, when *Jeſus* had opened

opened the Eyes of the Man that was *born blind*, and cured the Woman that had been *bowed together by a Spirit of Infirmity for eighteen Years*; what do they object? Why, *this Man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath Day.* John ix. ℣ 16. These Cures, the History tells us, were wrought on the Sabbath. What then? Why, therefore the Works were not the Works of God. So they reasoned. But our Saviour shewed them unanswerably, from their own allowed Practice in other Cases, that such Works as these would well consist with the Religion of the Sabbath. *Doth not each of you, on the Sabbath, loose his Ox or his Ass from the Stall, and lead him away to watering?* Or, *if an Ass or an Ox fall into a Pit, will he not straitway pull him out on the Sabbath Day? And they could not answer him again to these things.* Luke xiii. ℣ 5. Chap. xiv. ℣ 5, 6. But though he stopped their Mouths, he could not mend their Hearts. They had no Mind to be convinced, and therefore the slightest Pretences satisfied them; as you will see from another Instance. For when, to the *Amazement of all the People*, he had

by

by a Word ſpeaking cured a Man with *a withered Hand*; when he had looſened the Tongue of the Dumb, and opened the Eyes of the Blind, *certain of the Scribes and Phariſees anſwered, ſaying, Maſter, we would ſee a Sign from thee.* Matt. xii. 10. 22. 38. What Sign did they want? They had ſeen a withered Hand made whole; a blind and dumb Man ſee and ſpeak; and yet they ſtill call out for *a Sign*, that is, *a Sign from Heaven*, as it is expreſſed, *Matt.* xvi. ver. 1. and *Luke* xi. 16. Miracles, undoubted Miracles, would not do, unleſs they were Miracles of their own chuſing.

Theſe ſhuffling Excuſes of the *Jews* naturally bring to mind the like Pretences made uſe of by modern Unbelievers, whoſe Manner is to avoid what directly affects the Evidence, and to confront the Goſpel by more diſtant and remote Concluſions. When you appeal to the Scriptures in proof of *Chriſt's* Miracles; they will tell you in the groſs that they are Fables. Aſk them the Reaſon; they trouble not themſelves with this; but they have abundance of Reaſons

Reaſons (ſuch as they are) to ſhew that the Goſpel could not be from God. As for Inſtance—that it was not publiſhed *ſo ſoon*, or to *ſo* many as they think it ſhould—that it was not propagated in a *Way* that they approve—that it contains certain Matters that they do not underſtand; and the like. There is juſt as much Senſe and Pertinency in ſuch Arguments as theſe, as there was in the *Jewiſh* Objection about breaking the Sabbath. But we ſee, in both Examples, that when Men are fully bent not to believe a thing, and only want ſome colourable Pretences to excuſe themſelves, a very ſmall Matter will ſerve. The moſt idle Exceptions ſhall outweigh the cleareſt and moſt ſubſtantial Proofs.

As the *Jews* had their Prejudices againſt the Goſpel, ſo had the *Gentiles* theirs; but they were of another ſort. The Difference is thus ſtated by St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. i. 22. *The Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks ſeek after Wiſdom.* To the one the Croſs of *Chriſt* was a *Stumbling-block*, to the other the preaching of the Goſpel was *Foolishneſs*. As the *Jews* expected a mighty Monarch

Monarch in their Meſſiah, they looked that he ſhould come attended with all the Pomp and Terror of Power; with Thunderings and Lightenings; with Voices and Appearances from Heaven, as their Law was delivered upon Mount *Sinai*. To them therefore the low and humble Condition of *Chriſt* was a Rock of Offence. The *Gentiles* had been bred up in the Schools of their Philoſophers; and with them the Apoſtles fell under Contempt, becauſe they did not reaſon and diſpute as their Philoſophers were wont to do. But there was yet a greater Cauſe of Diſguſt than this, and that was the direct Oppoſition there was, between the Doctrines of the Goſpel and the Maxims and Practices of the Heathen World, which was every where over-run with Idolatry and Licentiouſneſs. Read once more what St. *Paul* ſays of them, *Rom.* i. 23. and following Verſes. *They changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man; and to Birds, and four-footed Beaſts, and creeping things. Wherefore God alſo gave them up to Uncleanneſs through the Luſts of their own Hearts, to diſhonour*

diſhonour their Bodies between themſelves— And even as they did not like to retain God in their Knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate Mind, to do thoſe things which were not convenient, being filled with all Unrighteouſneſs, Fornication, Wickedneſs, Covetouſneſs, Maliciouſneſs—and ſo on. Do you wonder that the Goſpel, which condemns all theſe Abominations, and *teaches us to deny Ungodlineſs, and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World*, ſhould be rejected by many who were vouchſafed the Offer of it by the Miniſtry of the Apoſtles? Great was its Light; great was its Evidence, as it appeared in the mighty Works wrought by their Hands. But what ſignifies Light to thoſe who have not Eyes to ſee; or Evidence to thoſe who have not Hearts to underſtand? As there is nothing that draws Men ſtronger than ſenſual Appetite; it muſt of courſe be the ſtrongeſt Biaſs againſt any Religion that ſtands in its Way, and offers to call them back to Rule and Order. Beſides that, brutiſh Habits in a great meaſure unqualify us for Thought and Reflection; whilſt at the ſame time they keep

keep us more awake, and attentive to every thing that gratifies Flesh and Blood; and even those who *think*, will find out Ways to baffle their Understandings, and make them side and fall in with the Stream of their Passions. The *Jews* pretended, that *Jesus* wrought Miracles by the Power of the Devil: The Heathens, no doubt, had their Subterfuges too, to shelter them from the Force of what they saw done by the Hands of the Apostles, which the false Philosophy that then prevailed could very easily furnish. And therefore St. *Paul* warns the Christians of those times, to *beware lest any Man spoiled* them, *through Philosophy and vain Deceit; after the Tradition of Men; after the Rudiments of the World.* Col. ii. 8. The Maxims of worldly and true Wisdom often run across; and when they do, the worldly Wisdom is too apt to prevail, as there is always that in it which flatters our Pride, if not our sensual Inclinations.

This is the Foundation of what St. *Paul* says, 1 *Cor.* i. 26. *Not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,*

are called. This is the Reaſon why *Chriſt* applied not himſelf to ſuch, but to the *Poor*, and to the *Meek*, and to the *Lowly*; who being leſs under the Influence of worldly Intereſts, were the better prepared to receive his Doctrine. Thoſe who draw this Conduct of our bleſſed Saviour into an Objection againſt the Goſpel, and inſinuate, as if it implied a Conſciouſneſs within himſelf, that the Proofs he had to offer in ſupport of his Pretenſions, were ſuch as would not ſtand a fair Trial, greatly miſtake the Matter. If we knew nothing of thoſe Proofs, there would be ſome Colour for the Objection. But the Evidence which *Chriſt* gave, was well known both to great and ſmall; and we are not now aſhamed to ſay what it was. He had the Power of God viſibly attending his Miniſtry in Signs and Wonders. This was a reaſonable Evidence. But a reaſonable Evidence muſt have reaſonable Men to conſider it, or it will work nothing. *Chriſt* therefore did no more in this, than what every wiſe Man would do in the faireſt, honeſteſt, Cauſe in the World; he ſought *impartial*, *diſintereſted* Judges; which the *wiſe* (as they were

were then eſteemed) and the *mighty*, and the *noble*, generally were *not*; as indeed, in ſuch Caſes, they very ſeldom *are*.

But to return to my Subject. It appears from the whole, that accepting the Goſpel or rejecting it, is a Matter in which *human Liberty* is properly concerned; without which Suppoſition, as Faith could challenge no Reward, ſo neither would Unbelief render us juſtly liable to Condemnation. A Man cannot ſin in judging or believing as the Evidence appears to him. This is not an Act of Choice. But he may ſin by a careleſs or wicked Mind, which keeps the Evidence out of Sight, or repreſents it in a falſe Light; becauſe no Man is careleſs or wicked, but by the Act of his own Will. It is not at all ſurprizing, that if this was the Caſe of many in the Days of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, it ſhould be the Caſe of more in theſe late Ages. For human Nature is always the ſame; human Paſſions ever work to the ſame Ends; and Prejudice will ever be more ſecure and undiſturbed, in proportion as the Accidents of Time furniſh out a greater Variety of Coverings, under

der which to hide and conceal it. Thoſe who lived in the time of *Chriſt* and ſaw his Miracles, had but one Point to conſider; Were ſuch Miracles an Evidence of his divine Miſſion? But now another Queſtion may ariſe; Were ſuch Miracles ever wrought? We ſee not the Miracles wrought, as they did. We believe them upon the Authority of the Scripture Hiſtory, againſt which Pretences of various kinds are not wanting, which may ſerve the Purpoſe of thoſe who love to find fault, and are not diſpoſed to conſider things in an impartial and equitable Light. In this State of the Caſe, when the Evidence of Faith has paſſed through many Hands, and has been conveyed down to us through a long Succeſſion of Ages; Learning and Good-ſenſe will be neceſſary to the forming a right Judgment in thoſe who are deſirous to ſee to the Bottom of it. But Learning is, like other Inſtruments, uſeful or hurtful according to the Hands into which it falls. The ſame natural Parts; the ſame ſame acquired Kuowledge, which qualify one Man to defend the Truth, will qualify another to traduce and expoſe it; and whether they ſhall be employed this way or

that way, will always depend upon the Temper and Diſpoſition with which Men enter upon ſuch Enquiries. Thus it muſt for ever be, except in thoſe Caſes, where the Weakneſſes and the Paſſions of Men are nothing intereſted; or where things are made ſo plain as to leave no room for Diſpute or Contradiction. The Evidence for Chriſtianity is not of this ſort, we confeſs; which, ſurely! can be no Reproach to our Faith, conſidering how few things there are that are capable of Demonſtration. In the Affairs of common Life we ſtand not upon ſuch high Terms. We ſeldom in ſuch Caſes conſider what is ſtrictly *poſſible* or *impoſſible*, but what is *moſt* certain, or what is *moſt* probable, according to the common Rules of judging, which our Experience and Obſervation have taught us. Let us but preſerve this Spirit in our religious Enquiries, and we ſhall find enough to ſatisfy us. Reaſonable Men will think this to be reaſonable Advice; but it is not to be expected that thoſe ſhould liſten to it, who from a ſecret Diſguſt, and Diſaffection to Religion, are deſirous to make the moſt of every Objection that can be raiſed againſt it.

For

For the Reaſons I have offered it is natural to expect, that when Vice and Immorality greatly prevail in any Age, Infidelity will keep an even Pace with it. 'Tis then we are to look to hear the Scriptures vilified, and the loweſt Artifices made uſe of to bring them into Diſrepute; which may afford a proper Caution, firſt, to ſerious Chriſtians, who mean well, but do not ſee a great way into the Reaſons of their Faith, and may be ſcandalized when they obſerve Men of Parts and Learning treating the Goſpel with Indifferency or Contempt. Let ſuch as theſe conſider the Spirit of the Times in which they live; let them obſerve *the Men and their Communications*, and if they find their Practices to be bad, they will ſee little Cauſe to rely upon their Judgments in ſuch Matters as theſe. I do not take upon me to affirm, that every Unbeliever is an immoral Man; nor does our Saviour ſay it. He ſtates the Fact as it *generally was*, and as Experience ſhews it *generally to be*. No Man ſhould be condemned raſhly; but when we ſee the Cauſes before our Eyes, we have a Right to judge of their Effects, and to ſuppoſe, that when a Man acts againſt Reaſon, he may judge and deter-

mine againſt it too. All Vices are not notorious; and where there are no open, immoral Practices, there may be ſecret Corruptions and Foibles, not leſs apt to miſlead Men in their Judgments. If a Man is not debauched in his Morals; he may be vain; he may be proud; which commonly breeds an Affectation of Novelty, and a Diſdain to think in the common Road. This Diſeaſe of the Mind is incident to the beſt Underſtandings, and is ſo much the more dangerous in its Conſequences, as it oftentimes lurks under a Conduct ſeemingly cool and diſintereſted. By Pride the Angels fell; by Pride the firſt of Men; and what Wonder is it that it ſhould be a Snare to his Poſterity? who, when they aſpire to be *knowing as* GOD, will find him in none of his Works, whether of Redemption, or of Creation! Laſtly; without the Suppoſition of any thing that is *culpable*, there may be ſomething in the *natural Frame*, and *Caſt* of the Mind, that may lead ſome into peculiar Ways of thinking upon certain Points, who may judge extremely well in other Matters; as is ſeen to a very great Degree in Caſes of *Madneſs*. But neither this, nor any of the foregoing Obſerva-

Obſervations, are offered as if they would at all help to decide the Merits of the Cauſe between Chriſtians and Unbelievers; but only to ſhew, that if we ourſelves are ſatisfied in the Reaſons of our Faith, we ſhould not be diſcouraged, though we ſhould obſerve ſome even of the greateſt Characters for their Parts and Learning, entertaining different Sentiments; becauſe there will always be room to ſuſpect, that the Judgments of ſuch may not be determined by the mere Force of Truth, without any Intermixture of human Weakneſs or Paſſion to give the Mind a wrong Turn.

A ſerious Addreſs to the Deiſts.

The other ſort of Men to whom I would apply myſelf (if I can be heard by ſuch) are Unbelievers themſelves, who ſhould not conſider it as an indifferent Matter, whether they accept the Goſpel when offered, or whether they wilfully ſhut their Eyes againſt the Truth. The Goſpel was intended for a Benefit to Mankind; but then it was intended likewiſe for the Glory of God; and therefore it is not offered to us in ſuch a way, as to leave it to our Diſcretion whether we will uſe the Benefit, or whether we will neglect

it; but under an Obligation to embrace the Means vouchſafed for our Salvation, upon pain of Condemnation for our Diſobedience. This Conſideration makes the accepting or not accepting the Goſpel, when it is offered, to be a very ſerious thing; and entitles it to a fair hearing: And this I will venture to ſay to thoſe, who are cool and diſintereſted in their Enquiries, and have a true Concern for the Intereſts of Natural Religion; that if they will conſider the Goſpel Revelation as an Inſtrument of Providence to reform the Corruptions of Men, and to aſſiſt and promote the Practice of real Virtue in the World; they will find in it ſuch Marks of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, as will be ſufficient to turn their Prejudices the other way, or at leaſt to cure that *Unwillingneſs* to believe, which has ever been the ſtrongeſt Obſtacle againſt its Reception. A ſhort Review of the chief Points of the Goſpel Doctrine, and the external Appointments in which the Practice of Chriſtians is concerned; will place this Matter in a very clear and ſatisfactory Light.

In what State Mankind was when *Chriſt* came, we have before ſet forth. Under Sin

Sin and Condemnation; Idolatry and Wickedneſs every where prevailing. See now what Steps were taken to reſtore Mankind, and to recover loſt Virtue. The firſt was to declare the Forgiveneſs of all paſt Offences, on the Condition of Repentance. This was a very neceſſary Point to begin with: To make Men *ſecure* that their Repentance ſhould be accepted. For if Mankind was to be reformed, there muſt have been ſome proper *Encouragement* to them to reform; which there could not have been, had there been no Hopes left from Repentance. If a Man is ſo much overwhelmed in Debt, as to ſee no Poſſibility of eſcaping a Gaol; what Spur will there be left for Induſtry?—But what occaſion was there for the Goſpel (may ſome one aſk) to give Mankind this Security? Doth not every one's Reaſon tell him, that God will accept of repenting Sinners? It is very natural for thoſe who have been bred up under the Goſpel Light, by which revealed Truths are ſo familiarized to the Underſtanding, that they paſs with them for pure, natural Principles, to aſk this and many ſuch like Queſtions. Reaſon no doubt will ſhew us,

that *without* Repentance no Man can be acceptable to God; and there can be as little doubt, that thoſe who ſee into the Error of their Ways, and change their Courſe of Life, ſhall find Mercy before our great and merciful Judge. But how far this Mercy will extend, is another Queſtion. What the Goſpel offers is a full and plenary Remiſſion of all Sins, or a Reſtitution to our firſt original Privileges; of which there is no Man of common Senſe who would not wiſh for ſome better Security, than mere natural Principles can give him. If a Man had offended an earthly Sovereign, and forfeited his Life or his Eſtate, by the Laws of his Country; which would he chuſe? To be left to *reaſon* upon the *Clemency* of his Prince; or to have his Pardon *ſealed* by the Royal Authority? The Caſes are alike. For whatever *Hopes* unaſſiſted Reaſon may adminiſter, that God will accept of Repentance, as a full Equivalent to that Obedience which we ought to have paid; ſtill they are *but* Hopes. But the Goſpel is the *Seal* of our Forgiveneſs, authorized by God himſelf; which leaving no room for Doubt or Diſtruſt, takes off every

every Weight that ſhould check our growing Reſolutions.

There can be no doubt but that Men's Endeavours to do well, will, where there is nothing elſe to hinder, always bear Proportion both to the Certainty and the Extent of the beneficial Conſequences, that offer themſelves as an Encouragement to Virtue. Conſider then what the Benefit of our Acceptance is; or what the Goſpel offers as the Fruit of our Repentance. It is not a ſimple Acquittance from the *Imputation* of *Guilt*, and from whatever *Puniſhment* God might think fit to inflict upon us as Sinners; but it is the Promiſe of *eternal Life*; of being raiſed again to an incorruptible State; to live for ever with him in Joy and Bliſs unſpeakable. Can natural Light ſhew us any ſuch Fruit of Repentance as this? I deny not that Reaſon gives ſtrong Notices of a future State, where a juſt and proper Diſtinction ſhall be made between good and bad Men; and that many of the ancient Philoſophers believed this Doctrine. But the weak Principles by which they ſupported it; and the doubtful,

doubtful, uncertain Manner in which ſome of the wiſeſt of them expreſſed themſelves, very plainly ſhew, that as this Notion was not taken up at firſt merely upon natural Principles, ſo ſome farther Help was wanting to make it a ſure, and ſtable Principle of Conduct. I can eaſily ſee a great Fitneſs in ſuppoſing, that God will reward the Good and puniſh the Bad in another World; becauſe I do not obſerve, that he does it with any Degree of Exactneſs in this. But I ſee no Neceſſity of ſuppoſing, that in order to juſtify himſelf to his Creatures, God muſt repay the little Good we do with an eternal Reward.

But to judge rightly of the Uſefulneſs of the Goſpel, we ſhould conſider, not what was neceſſary to a few only; but how it is calculated to ſerve the Bulk of Mankind. Be it admitted, that ſome few of the wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate might, and did, by the Uſe of their Reaſon, diſcover ſuch Evidences of a future State, as proved effectual to ſupport a common Virtue; how ſhould the common People come by theſe Notions? It is plain that they could not have

reaſoned

reaſoned themſelves into this Belief (a Work for which they are by no means qualified) they muſt have had it by *Authority*, as in fact they had. Their Philoſophers taught it; their Legiſlators encouraged it; and ſo they took it up by Education and Cuſtom, as the Bulk of Mankind does almoſt every thing elſe. Now when Notions are left to reſt upon Authority, their Influence will be greater or leſs in proportion to the Weight of that Authority upon which they are received. And this will open to us a very conſiderable Difference between the State of Religion, as it ſubſiſted under the mere Guidance of natural Light, and as it ſtood when the Goſpel appeared. The Heathens believed a future State upon the Authority of their wiſe Men; the Goſpel offers it to our Belief upon the Authority of GOD. There is in all Caſes a great Difference between divine Authority and an Authority merely human; but the Authority of the heathen Philoſophers was much weakened by the Diſagreement in their Sentiments among themſelves. Some believed a future State; others denied it; and thoſe who doubted, and would ſatisfy themſelves, had

no

no other way of doing it, than by deciding upon the Merits of their Reaſonings; which very few were qualified by their Capacities to do. But *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles came with the viſible Marks of the Power of God attending their Miniſtry, and declared *in his Name*, that he *had appointed a Day in which he would judge the World*; which Evidence, at the ſame time that it wrought Conviction, awakened Mankind alſo into Attention and Reverence, when they ſaw, in theſe mighty Works, the God of Heaven and Earth, as it were, *preſent* among them.

Take theſe things together, and you will perceive, that nothing could be better ſuited to reform a corrupted and degenerate World, than the preaching of the Goſpel; before which Idolatry and Superſtition vaniſhed, like Darkneſs at the Riſing of the Sun, long before heathen Princes were converted, and aided its farther Growth and Increaſe by the Sanctions of Civil Authority. Now let us ſee, what Methods the divine Providence hath provided, that the Goſpel thus eſtabliſhed ſhould be propa-

gated

gated to future Ages, to ſtand as a Barrier againſt, Vice and Corruption, and to convey the Benefit of its ſaving Influence to Generations yet unborn.

In the firſt place, God hath given us his WRITTEN WORD; which is a ſtanding Call to Repentance, upon the Motives of a Life to come. As Men were Sinners againſt the firſt Law; ſo, it was foreſeen that they would be Sinners againſt the ſecond; nor was it ſuitable to the Frailties and Imperfections of human Nature to expect otherwiſe. And therefore the Offers of Acceptance upon Repentance, are made to extend to all Tranſgreſſions, future as well as paſt. Great Condeſcenſion! And yet not more than the Wiſdom of God ſaw fit and proper for us. Of this amazing Inſtance of God's Love to Mankind, and his *Unwillingneſs that any ſhould periſh*, the Scriptures are our Charter; in which *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles *being dead*, do *yet ſpeak* to us; and ſhew the Power of God in *Signs and Wonders*, wrought for the *Confirmation of his Word*. Nor are the Scriptures uſeful only as they contain the

Evi-

Evidences of our *Faith*; but as they are a *Rule* of *Practice* plain and eaſy to be underſtood by all. Our natural Notions of Right and Wrong are, to a ſerious, attentive Mind, as plain a Direction in ordinary Caſes, as any written Law can be. But Vice and Corruption may pervert Reaſon and defile natural Light, as it heretofore did in the heathen World; inſomuch that the Philoſophers of old found it neceſſary to *aſſiſt* Reaſon; to deduce moral Duties from their firſt Principles; and ſhew their Alliance with the real Happineſs of Mankind. This was all they *could* do; and no doubt it had very good Effects upon many. But the Goſpel takes a much nearer Courſe; and ſends all away with this ſhort and plain Anſwer, *Thus it is written—God hath ſaid it.* The Philoſophers wrote many uſeful Books of Morality; but they wanted *Authority*; by which alone, the leſs capable (which are always the far greateſt) Part of Mankind are to be kept right; which would very ſenſibly be felt, if we ſhould take away the *Bible* from the common People, and give them the *Ethics* of *Ariſtotle*, or *Cicero*, in their ſtead. To make

make ſuch Writings uſeful and inſtructive, you muſt give them Underſtandings as well as Books. But every one that is not a direct Idiot, may underſtand the *ten Commandments*, and ſuch eaſy and familiar Leſſons as he finds in the New Teſtament; and if he is taught to believe, that theſe are the Word of God, he wants nothing elſe (ſo far as Authority can go) to enforce the Practice of them.

But here perhaps a Queſtion may be be moved; How can the common People receive a rational Conviction, that the Scriptures are the Word of God? Can they enter into thoſe Arguments which are moved among Men of Letters, concerning the Authors and Authority of theſe Books? No; nor is it needful that they ſhould. Thoſe who think that God cannot grant a Revelation worthy of himſelf, unleſs it be of that ſort, that all who are to have the Benefit of it, ſhall ſee its Evidence in the full Extent and Compaſs of it; may aſk ſuch Queſtions. But this is laying a Foundation upon which no Religion, whether revealed or natural, can poſſibly ſtand. The Heathens, as I have before obſerved, believed

lieved a future State; and without this Belief there can be no ſufficient Security for the Practice of Virtue. But upon what foot was this Doctrine received among the common People? Do you think they were all Philoſophers, and able to deduce it from natural Principles, as the Philoſophers did? No; they took it (as they did a great many other things) upon the Credit of the *current*, *National Senſe*. Should Chriſtianity be loſt, and Heatheniſm again revive, the Caſe muſt again be the ſame. Some few might be able to reaſon themſelves into Religion; but the far greater Part muſt take it upon Truſt. There is no Difference in this reſpect between Chriſtianity and other Religions. As the Heathens had their *firſt* and *leading Principles*, which they took upon the Authority of *common Conſent*, ſo have the Chriſtians theirs; and ſo have the Profeſſors of every Religion in the World as well as they. It is upon this Authority that the Scriptures are (generally) received among us, as the Word of God. Few can ſhew the *Reaſons* why they ought to be ſo received; but all hear and underſtand the

common

common Voice, which does and muſt ſerve *inſtead* of Evidence, to thoſe who are not qualified to look any farther. The Faith of ſuch, no doubt, is leſs complete and perfect in its kind; but their Virtues are not the leſs ſecure. For Virtue follows Faith *itſelf*; not the *Reaſons* upon which Faith is grounded.

But though God hath given us a *Law*, which all may underſtand, and by which all may improve; yet is not the Effect therefore without Hazard. Human Nature is ever the ſame; ſubject to Diſturbance from Luſt and Paſſion: And as, before the Goſpel came, Men were Sinners againſt the Law, not becauſe they ſaw not the Law, but becauſe they wanted Reſolution to put it in Practice; ſo it is now. The Motives to Virtue are, indeed, now ſet before us in the moſt ſtrong and advantageous Light. But ſtill they are but *diſtant* Motives; and diſtant Proſpects are apt to loſe their Force, if ſober Attention, and frequent Reflexion, do not bring them home to the Mind. It is to this Purpoſe that the ORDINANCES, and the INSTI-

TUTIONS of the Goſpel are intended to ſerve. We are to pray to God; to hear and read his Word; to receive the Sacrament of the holy Communion, and the like: All to the ſame End; to keep us always awake and attentive to our great and laſting Intereſt; and to receive thoſe Supplies of Aid from above, that may lead us to grow and improve in every good Work. Conſider outward Religion in this Light; as a Diſcipline training us up to Virtue; the Barrier and Out-guard of that true, inward Piety, which alone can render us acceptable in the Sight of God; and what can you find in it that a reaſonable Man will not approve? Little Cauſe, ſurely! there is to treat theſe things as *ſuperſtitious Inventions.* Superſtitious they *may* be as they are *uſed*; and ſo may any thing elſe. But take them as intended by the Wiſdom that appointed them, and according to the Ends that they are naturally calculated to ſerve; and no doubt they are wholſom and neceſſary Proviſions; to guard againſt that habitual and ſervile Attachment to the World, which would defeat all our future Hopes, and render God's Call

Call by the Goſpel ineffectual. It is an eaſy Matter for a man to ſay, "I want "none of theſe Helps. I believe in God; "I know my Duty; I can conſider by "myſelf, and practiſe, without going to "Church to pray, or to hear Sermons." It may be ſo; but are you ſure you *ſhall* do every thing of this kind that is proper to be done? Or (which is a far more material Queſtion) are you ſure that every body elſe will do ſo? Publick Proviſions are made for *general* Uſe; and with a View, not to what Men *may* do if they are ſo diſpoſed; but to what, Circumſtances conſidered, they moſt probably *will* do: And this we may ſay with the greateſt Appearance of Reaſon, that had God tied us down to no kind of external Worſhip, but left every Man to the ſimple Effects of his own private Reflections, the Goſpel (and with it *true Religion)* would long ago have been loſt to the World.

We ſee then upon the whole, that God, by the Goſpel, has done every thing that in the Nature and Reaſon of things was fit to be done, towards ſecuring the Practice

of moral Duties. The Law is plain and legible to all; we cannot therefore plead *Ignorance*. *Life and Death*, *Bleſſing and Curſing*, are ſet before us; we cannot then plead Want of *Encouragement*. God's Miniſters and his Ordinances are ready at hand, open to our Uſe; we cannot therefore ſay, that we have not been, or that we might not have been, *admoniſhed*. Every thing is done that could be done, ſhort of *Force*; and with *Force*, the Nature of Religion will not ſtand. And therefore when Men cry up Natural Religion, and at the ſame time treat the Goſpel with Contempt, what is it that they can mean? The Life of a good Chriſtian is the Perfection of natural Religion; and he that truly values Natural Religion, will value the Goſpel for Natural Religion's ſake. If the Goſpel were not ſupported by proper Evidence, it would be a good Reaſon why it ſhould be rejected. But why ſhould any Man be *prejudiced* againſt the Goſpel, who means well to Natural Religion? Why ſhould he examine and judge with an *Unwillingneſs* to be convinced? *To deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly*,

berly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World; is the very thing you mean (or *ſhould* mean) by Natural Religion; and this is all the *Burden* that the Goſpel lays upon you. To ſhew Reverence to the *outward Appointments* of the Goſpel; what hath it in it that can give juſt Cauſe of Offence? The Goſpel makes Allowance for neceſſary Omiſſions of this ſort; and for the reſt, if you think it worth your while to improve in Virtue, the Benefit will amply repay you. But if you are diſpleaſed at every thing that ſtands as a Check upon your Vices, theſe things will offend; and here, I fear, lies the Bottom of the Sore. Men talk of Natural Religion, becauſe it ſounds well; but they mean ſomething elſe. The Goſpel is a *preciſe*, *definitive* Syſtem of Natural Religion; and there are few Inſtances in which a Believer can do wrong, without being ſelf-condemned. But if the plain, written Word is once laid aſide, and every Man is left to his own Senſe of things; Natural Religion will then be to every Man what He ſees right; which in many Caſes may be, what Paſſion ſuggeſts, and not what Reaſon dictates.

A ſerious Addreſs to profeſſed Chriſtians.

I have one Word of Advice more to offer, and it is to thoſe who profeſs themſelves the Diſciples of *Chriſt*; who ſhould attend diligently to the high Privilege to which they are called, and take care not to defeat the gracious Purpoſes of God towards them and all Mankind, by their *wicked Lives*. St. *Paul* ſpeaking of the *diſorderly Walkers* of his Times, ſets them forth as *Enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*, i. e. to that Method of Salvation which is eſtabliſhed upon *Chriſt's Sacrifice*. And the Reaſons why they are ſo are very obvious. *Chriſt* died to ſave us; but a mere Profeſſion, without a Life ſuitable to it, will not ſave us, but greatly add to our Condemnation. Such Men as theſe therefore are firſt Enemies to *themſelves*; and by being ſo they are Enemies to GOD, who taketh *no Pleaſure in the Death of him that dieth*; *who is not willing that any ſhould periſh*, *but that all ſhould come to Repentance*. 2 Pet. iii. 9. Ezech. xviii. 32.

But there is another, more extenſive, Senſe, in which the wicked Lives of thoſe who

who profeſs the Goſpel, may be ſaid to defeat the Purpoſe of the Goſpel, which, I conceive, the Apoſtle chiefly intended in this Place, *viz.* that it brings Chriſtianity under *Diſgrace*, and expoſes it to the Scorn of Unbelievers. St. *Peter*, ſpeaking of the *falſe Teachers* that ſhould ariſe in the Chriſtian Church, ſays, that *many ſhall follow their pernicious* (or filthy) *Ways*, *by reaſon of whom the Way of Truth* (*i. e.* the Goſpel) *ſhall be evil ſpoken of.* 2 Pet. ii. 2. St. *Paul* tells the *Jews*, that *through them*, *i. e.* by their wicked Lives, *the Name of God was blaſphemed among the Gentiles.* Rom. ii. 24. And he exhorts Chriſtians to all manner of ſober and exemplary Behaviour, *that the Word of God* (*i. e.* the Goſpel) *might not be blaſphemed.* Tit. ii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 1. The Reaſon will for ever hold. An immoral Life will always be a Reproach to the Religion a Man profeſſes. For what will be the Conſtruction? Why, either that his Religion allows of ſuch a Behaviour (which no reaſonable Religion can) or that, if it doth not, he does not in earneſt believe it himſelf. When the Goſpel was firſt publiſhed to the World, there

were nominal Profeſſors who *taught* Licentiouſneſs, as well as practiſed it. Theſe were a Reproach to the true Believers; to whom the ſame Corruptions would naturally be imputed, by thoſe who were not enough acquainted with both to know the Difference. And even the true Believers, who lived ill, did more to diſgrace themſelves and the Doctrines they received, by their ill Lives, than the Doctrines could do to recommend the Goſpel. For the Doctrines were known but to a few; the Men and their Manners were open to all; and they who ſaw the one to be bad, would be ready enough to preſume that the other were ſo too.

This Obſervation ſuits (and ſhould be conſidered by all whom it concerns) the Caſe of thoſe Chriſtian Colonies, who are ſettled in foreign Parts; and who if they ſhew a Behaviour, not better (and it may be worſe) than is practiſed by the very Heathens, among whom they dwell; will have little Cauſe to expect, that any Attention ſhould be paid to the preaching of the Goſpel. But let us take the Caſe as it

ſtands

ſtands among ourſelves, where it is well known and underſtood, that all immoral Practices are condemned by the Goſpel; and conſider what Notion the ignorant and leſs inſtructed will moſt naturally entertain, when they ſhall obſerve thoſe who pretend to underſtand and to have conſidered Chriſtianity, and perhaps may magnify it much in their Diſcourſes, running counter to its Rules and Precepts, in their Lives and Converſations. There are few (as I have before obſerved) who take up Religion as the Reſult of Judgment and Enquiry. We are bred up to it as we are to Arts and Sciences; and what we take up at firſt *implicitly* from our Parents, and Inſtructors, we retain afterwards, for the greater part, more in Reliance upon the publick Voice and Opinion, than upon any Conviction of our own, founded upon a clear and full Sight of the Evidence. This is no Reflection upon Religion, nor indeed upon Mankind; becauſe in the Nature, and Conſtitution of things, otherwiſe it cannot be. All Men are not qualified for Enquiries of this kind; and, comparatively ſpeaking, perhaps few are. Men of Education and Leiſure may

do

do much for themſelves; but thoſe who are born to the laborious, or buſy Employments of Life, *muſt* take their Religion from the common Inſtruction, or they will have none. And yet, after all, the Goſpel muſt ſtand or fall by its Evidence. Thoſe who receive it, not ſeeing its Evidence, do it upon a Preſumption, that there is Evidence ſeen and known to thoſe who are qualified to judge of it. But how will it weaken this Preſumption, when a Man (I ſay) ſhall obſerve thoſe upon whoſe Judgment he relies, talking indeed the common Language of Believers, but living as if they had no Religion at all? "Are you "in earneſt (may ſome one aſk) when "you tell me, upon the Authority of the "Goſpel, that eternal Wrath is prepared "for Sinners; and will you yet make "yourſelf a Tranſgreſſor of the Law? "Why do you read me this Leſſon but to "reform my Life? Do you believe it, and "will you not reform your own? Is it not "of more Concern to you to ſave yourſelf, "than it is to ſave me?" Upon this ſort of Reaſoning Mankind is apt to *preſume*, that bad Livers are not heartily convinced of the Truth

Truth of Religion, though out of Cuſtom and Compliance with the World they may make an outward ſhew of it. I do not ſay that the Preſumption is right; and, I truſt, it very often fails. For we ſee in other Inſtances, that Mens Perſuaſions and their Practices are not always of a Piece. If there is any thing plain to common Senſe and Experience, it is this; that bad Courſes are the high Road to Beggary and Miſery. Yet we have Rakes and Spendthrifts. We cannot, therefore, *certainly* conclude, that a Man has no Faith becauſe he has little Virtue. But it is a *Handle* that thoſe will always be ready to lay hold of, who want to *excuſe* themſelves from believing; and they are all who *love Darkneſs rather than Light*; the looſe, the idle, and the vain; who ſtrengthen themſelves in Numbers, and having no Judgment of their own, or not caring to make uſe of any, will naturally lay the greateſt Weight on the Side that moſt favours their ſenſual Inclinations.

But if ſuch Examples do not make Men directly Unbelievers, they certainly will produce in many great *Careleſſneſs* of Behaviour;

haviour; which is another way of defeating the Purpoſe of the Goſpel. There can be no Queſtion, but that as the Rule of every Man's Conduct is the Law of God; ſo the proper Motive of his Actions is, a Senſe of Duty to God, under the Views of thoſe Rewards and Puniſhments, which he hath reſerved for good and bad Men at the great Day of Recompence. And wherever theſe Principles lay faſt hold, and become the prevailing Subject of our Thoughts, bad Examples can do no Harm. But becauſe theſe things lie at a Diſtance, and are therefore too apt to be overlooked; the good Providence of God hath, as a *preſent* Aid to our Infirmities, thrown many Rubs and Checks in the forbidden Paths of Life, conſpiring with our future Hopes and Expectations, and mutually aſſiſting to keep us within our proper Bounds. Of this ſort, among many others, is the Senſe of *Shame*, which every Man feels when he does things notoriouſly bad; and than which there is not a ſtronger Barrier againſt Vice, till, by frequency in ſinning, the Mind is hardened and grows to be inſenſible. It is to be feared, that many obſerve a decent

a decent Behaviour, more from the preſent Diſgrace to which their Vices will expoſe them; than through the Apprehenſions of what is to come hereafter. Even this imperfect Virtue is better than none. It is a good Step to Religion, if it be not Religion itſelf. If a Man keeps himſelf free from bad Habits, virtuous Inclinations will naturally follow; as the good Seed that is ſown, will grow up and flouriſh, when the Ground is kept clear from Weeds and Rubbiſh. But a bad Example (ſo far as it goes) takes off the Reſtraint of *Shame*. For what is *Shame*, but that *Diſguſt* which a Man feels within himſelf, from the Preſumption that he ſtands condemned by thoſe who are Witneſſes of his ill Behaviour? And can you be preſumed to condemn another for what you allow in your ownſelf? If in common Eſtimation all Actions were alike, nobody would be aſhamed of any thing that he does; and this would *appear* to be the Caſe, ſhould Mankind generally act as if there *was* no Diſtinction. Every bad Man does what in him lies to bring on this wretched State of things. The Vices of Nations are the Vices of Individuals,

duals; which ſpread like a Contagion from Houſe to Houſe, till they fill every Corner of the Land. And when bad Men are thus left free from all Reſtraint, and Vice has obtained as it were the publick Sanction; the few good ones that are left are borne down, as by a mighty Torrent; and what are we to think of the Goſpel when this is the Caſe? Or what of thoſe, who by firſt breaking down the Banks, and running out of their proper Incloſure, draw Multitudes after them, like Herds of Cattle, to their own Deſtruction? Our Saviour has decided their Caſe in very ſolemn Terms, *Matt.* xviii. 7. *Wo unto the World becauſe of Offences; for it muſt needs be that Offences come; but wo unto that Man by whom the Offence cometh—it were better for him that a Milſtone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea.—Take heed that ye deſpiſe not one of theſe little Ones—for the Son of Man is come to ſave that which was loſt.* Our Saviour calls his Diſciples, *little Ones*; ſuch they were in all worldly Eſtimation. Low in their Circumſtances and Stations; little in their Knowledge and

and Experience of human Things. And ſuch are the Bulk of Believers in all Ages. The more apt therefore are they to be ſcandalized, and run into bad Courſes, when they ſee their Betters lead the Way before them. But they are not to be *deſpiſed*; for the Son of God came to ſave *them* as well as *the reſt*. And therefore to the young and to the ignorant; to the weak and unexperienced; we ſhould be the Patterns of of good things, even for their Weakneſs and their Infirmities ſake; otherwiſe, *their* Sins will be *our* Sins, and ſo reckoned at the Day of Judgment. *In many things we offend all*; and would we ſearch and examine ourſelves, and ſee how the Reckoning ſtands, only as it lies between God and our own Conſciences; we ſhall find it heavy enough, and ſee Cauſe to cry out, with *David*, *O cleanſe thou me from my ſecret Faults!* But *ſcandalous* Offences ſhould make us tremble. For who knows whom they may corrupt, whom they may pervert? And how ſad an Account ſhall we have to give, when, together with our own Sins, the Sins of Numbers ſhall be laid to our Charge! There is no reckoning how far

far the Influence of a bad Example reaches, nor what are the worſt of its Effects; for the Seeds of Corruption once ſown, work unſeen and unobſerved; and the moſt melancholy Conſideration of all is, that when the Miſchief is done, it may never be capable of Reparation. There is no way of making Reparation for Sin but by true Repentance; and when a bad Man, who has been an Example of Vice, becomes an Example of Repentance too, he has done his utmoſt. But we ſhould conſider, that, generally ſpeaking, Men are more prone to follow bad Examples than good ones; and that many may be hurt by our Vices, who will know nothing of our Reformation, or if they do, will nothing profit by it. And what a mortifying Reflection muſt it be to a Man, when he comes to recover from his Vices, and to entertain a ſerious Senſe of Religion, to conſider, that by one bad Part of his Life he has done that Miſchief, for which all that remains of it, be it ever ſo long, may never make a ſufficient Amends!

The

The Reſult is this, that *every one that nameth the Name of Chriſt*, ſhould *depart from Iniquity*, and ſtudy *to adorn his Doctrine in all things*, by a Behaviour ſuitable to his Profeſſion. The greater Influence his Station and Character gives him, the ſtronger will the Argument hold him; for the Effects will always bear a Proportion to it. No Man is ſo mean as not to be conſiderable to certain Perſons, and on certain Accounts; and therefore the Argument reaches to all. But a bad Life is worſt in thoſe who ſtand diſtinguiſhed from the common Rank of Men by a Superiority in Birth and Fortunes, or in Wiſdom, or in Authority, and Pre-eminence; becauſe theſe are they from whom the Bulk of Mankind take their Maxims. For this Reaſon our Saviour gives it in particular Charge to his firſt Diſciples, who were to be the Inſtruments by which the Goſpel was to be ſpread over the Face of the Earth, to *let their Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they might ſee their good Works, and glorify their Father which is in Heaven. Ye* (ſays he) *are the Salt of the Earth*; *but if the Salt*

has loſt its Savour, wherewith ſhall it be ſalted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be caſt out, and to be trodden under foot of Men. Matt. v. 13. 16. Meet it is that we confeſs, *with Fear and Trembling*, how juſtly founded are the publick Expectations, that we, who by our Office are the *Preachers of Righteouſneſs*, ſhould be the *Examples* of it too. And meet it is that every Man for himſelf, beſides the common Obligation he is under from his Chriſtian Profeſſion, to a ſober and godly Converſation, ſhould likewiſe ſeriouſly lay to heart, what kind of Behaviour the particular Character and Situation he bears in Life more eſpecially enforces; that our Virtues may ſhine in their full Proportion and Beauty. This would bring Religion into Credit and Eſteem; and ſtir up a noble Emulation, which ſhall moſt excell in every thing that is virtuous and praiſe-worthy. But if thoſe who are to be Patterns to others, ſhall do ill themſelves; it is not to be expected, that the reſt of the World ſhould do better.

I will add one thing more, which is, that an immoral Life in thoſe who believe the

the Goſpel, not only brings it into Diſgrace with others, but, in the long run, makes it contemptible even to themſelves. The State of a Chriſtian, when his Conduct is ſuch as will give him a juſt Foundation for Hope and Truſt in God, is a moſt deſirable thing. But when he ſees nothing but the Sentence of God againſt himſelf, it is of all States the moſt miſerable. How ſhall a Man change the Proſpect? By Repentance? Yes. But Repentance is the Reſtoration of the moral State. He that repents, from an immoral becomes a moral Man, and then the Promiſes of the Goſpel are open to him. But ſuppoſe he does not find a Heart to repent. What muſt he do then? Why, he muſt either lay aſide his Faith; or he muſt contrive ſuch Softenings and Palliations of the Law, as will render his Faith dead and fruitleſs. The Force of Education is ſtrong, but it is not irreſiſtible. We find it hard to lay aſide thoſe Opinions which we have been bred up in; but it is to be done if we will take pains for it: And this, I am afraid, is too common a Caſe, that in proportion as Men grow bad in Practice, they grow bad in Principle

too. Few ſet out with irreligious Principles at firſt. They ſin to gratify their Paſſions, without giving themſelves the Trouble to think of Conſequences. But when their Vices begin to make them uneaſy, they are drawn off by Degrees. Their Inclinations naturally beget *Hopes* favourable to themſelves; and theſe *Hopes* grow into *vehement Preſumptions*, or *ſettled Opinions*, as Reaſon, diſturbed by Paſſion, grows unfaithful to itſelf, and by Diſuſe and Miſapplication contracts every Day more and more an Unaptneſs to compare and lay things together. It may be as difficult to explain the Manner, *how* the Underſtandings of Men are warped to ſee things in a falſe and deceitful Light, as it is to explain how a ſtrait Limb grows diſtorted, or how the whole Body degenerates from a robuſt to a ſickly Conſtitution. But of the Reality of the thing we can as little doubt. There are diſtempered Minds as well as diſtempered Bodies; and a corrupted Heart as naturally makes an unſound Head, as a foul Stomach produces Indigeſtions.

This

This ſhould teach all who have ſuch a Value for their Religion as to be deſirous to keep it; to take Care of the firſt Beginnings of Vice. When *Eliſha* had told *Hazael*, that he ſhould kill his Maſter, he anſwered like a Man aſtoniſhed, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he ſhould do this thing?* 2 Kings viii. 13. But he did it; and Thouſands come to that in the Progreſs of Vice, which at firſt ſetting out they would have thought of with Abhorrence. It is ſhocking to a Mind that has been formed by Education to virtuous Principles, at firſt hearing, to be told, that there is no God, or no Providence, or no future Reckoning; but if he gives himſelf a Looſe to Vice, he will ſoon be reconciled to ſuch Maxims; and what then ſhall ſave him? We know there is no Salvation for Sinners but by Repentance, the Motives to which every true Believer has within himſelf. But if a Man thinks that he is to *die like the Beaſt that periſheth*, he will very conſiſtently think, he has a Right to live like them too; and every Argument you can offer to bring him to better Courſes will be vain and fruitleſs.

To

To conclude now in a very few Words. We have ſeen the direct Oppoſition that immoral Practices bear to the fundamental Intereſts of the Goſpel, and to every reaſonable Expectation of thoſe who are willing to be ſaved by it. *Let us* therefore *caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, and let us put on the Armour of Light*; remembring that *Deſtruction* will be the *End* of all ungodly Men, who *turn the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs*. And what does this *Deſtruction* mean? Not that Paradiſe of Fools a State of *Annihilation*, but *everlaſting Deſtruction from the Preſence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, when he ſhall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, and in flaming Fire to take Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Theſſ. i. 7—11. Publick and ſolemn Adminiſtrations of Juſtice naturally ſtrike the Mind with Awe and Terrror; and no Man on ſuch Occaſions can hear the Sentence of Death come forth from the Mouth of an earthly Judge,

without feeling ſuch Impreſſions, as will make him fearful to offend. Is there any Image to be taken from human things, that can fully repreſent to us the awful Solemnity of that Day; when God, ſurrounded with his heavenly Hoſt, ſhall come forth to judge the World; and when all People, Nations, and Languages, ſummoned by his dreadful Voice, ſhall appear in one grand Aſſembly before him; to receive each Man his Doom, the Good to *inherit the Kingdom prepared for* them, and the Bad to be thrown down headlong into that fiery Gulf, which is *prepared for the Devil and his Angels!* We never can but *once* have the *Experience* what it is *to fall into the Hands of the living God*; but from leſſer things we may make ſome Eſtimate of greater; and it is certain, that the dulleſt Imagination can frame no Idea of the great Day of Accounts, that will not riſe incomparably higher, than the very warmeſt Sentiments we can feel from the Experience of any thing of the like ſort that we ſee and know about us. It is for this Reaſon that bad Men obſtinately ſhut their Eyes againſt it. They cannot bear the Sight of it. And if

by

by the ſame Act they could tye up the Hands of Juſtice, and defeat the Purpoſes of God, there might be ſome Senſe in it. But what ſay you? Will you blind-fold yourſelf and be daſhed in Pieces, becauſe you cannot ſtand the Shock of the dreadful Precipice that lies before you, which if you would but ſuffer yourſelf to ſee, it would make you keep your Diſtance and prevent the Miſchief! Aſſuredly the Deſign of Providence (and a gracious Deſign it is) in opening to us the End of bad Men, is to *warn* us of our Danger, that, *knowing the Power of his Wrath*, we may order our Steps aright. Happy for us if theſe Warnings will ſuffice, and we will not delay to be convinced till it is too late to *take* Warning; and *that Experience* which alone will *convince* us, *determines* our State to Miſery without Redemption.

F I N I S.